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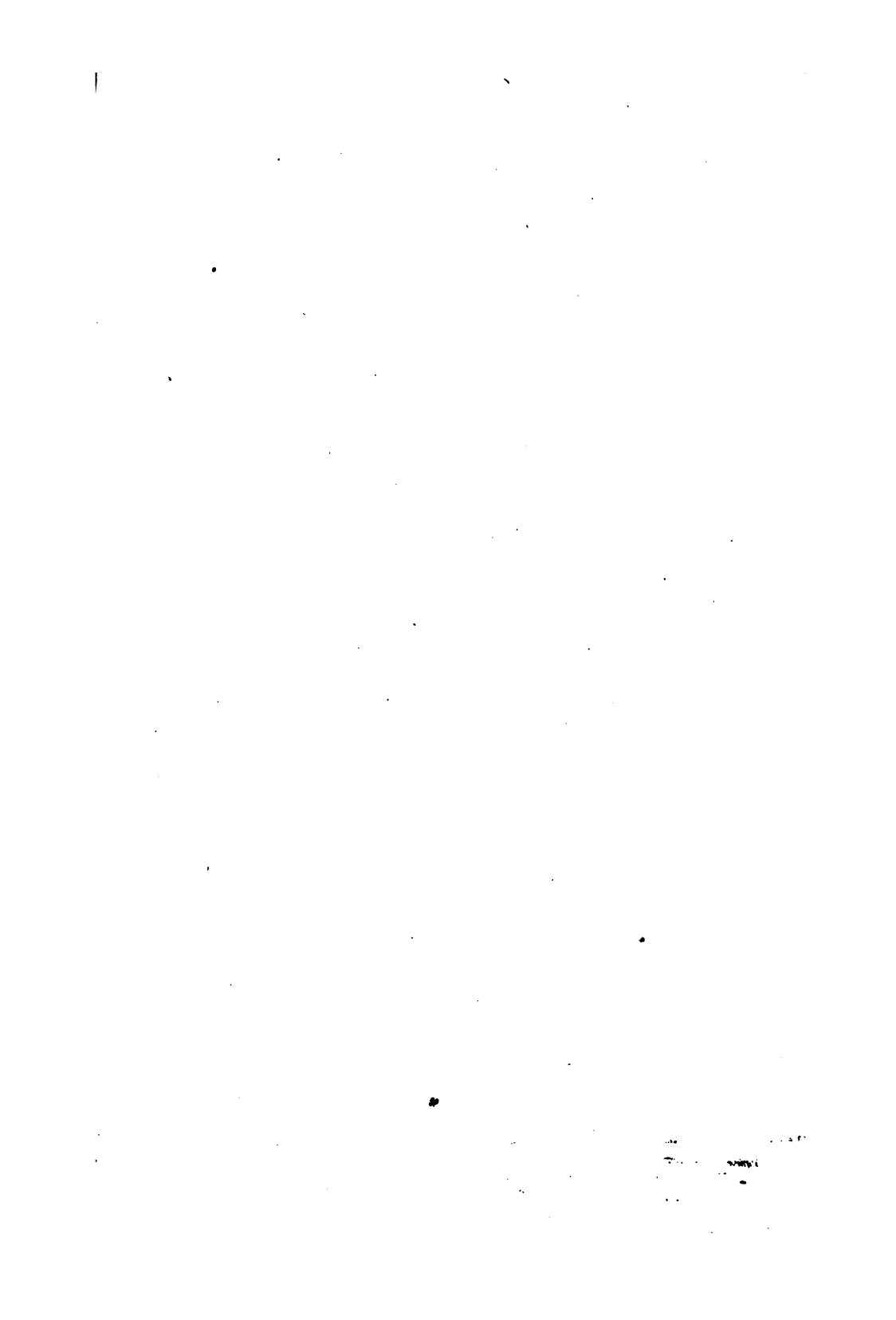
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B E A T R I C E .

VOL. I.

BEATRICE.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "QUEEN MAB,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BEATRICE.

CHAPTER I.

THE night was very bleak. The wind blew keen and strong, as, pushing open the garden gate, Mr. Richard Gordon stumbled on through the darkness to the door of his cottage. When he reached it he stood still and wiped his forehead, on which the perspiration stood in thick drops, cold though the evening was, and slowly though he had walked home from the City. He did not knock at once, and twice, when he stretched his hand towards the brass ring, he let it fall down again. At length he took heart, and a feeble knock, scarcely like that of the master of the house, startled Mrs. Gordon from her sleep on the sofa, in the warm parlour.

“That cannot be Richard,” she thought, sitting

up and listening for her husband's voice ; but it was he, for she heard him saying to the servant :

" Jane, where is the child ?"

" Miss Beatrice is at the Martins', sir."

" Oh ! very well."

Mr. Gordon opened the parlour door and entered. The cheerful light of the bright coal fire in the grate fell on his face. It was deathly pale, and as Mr. Gordon was a pale, fair man, who always looked delicate, he now looked very ill indeed.

" My dear Richard," cried his wife, much startled, " what ails you ?"

" I am not quite well. Where is the child ?"

" My dear, she is at the Martins', opposite."

Mr. Gordon went to the window. He lifted up the blind and looked out across the street, at a range of windows on the first floor of a house facing his cottage.

The street was dark, save for the flitting glare of the gaslights, but the house of the Martins was gaily lit up, and childish shadows, magnified into grotesque proportions, were moving across the blinds. One Mr. Gordon watched for, and saw at last. It was shorter than the rest, and it had heavy curls, which it shook back with a quick, impatient toss of its little head. Mr. Gordon looked at it for some time, then came back to the fire and

sat down at a little distance from his wife. She saw him shiver, and she said a little crossly,

"Did you do as I told you, Mr. Gordon? Did you take the omnibus?"

"No, my dear. I walked home."

"And took cold, I can see it. You will drive me distracted, Mr. Gordon. I wish you would take my advice some times. But you never will, Mr. Gordon."

Mr. Gordon made no reply, and his wife looked fretfully at the fire. She too was fair, a pretty woman of thirty, with blue eyes and a clear complexion, spite habitual ill-health, which seldom let her leave the couch on which she was now lying, and which had somewhat impaired a temper both gentle and loving. But as she was fond of her husband after all, and could not bear to think that he was ill or in pain, she soon said in a more amiable tone—

"Take something warm, Richard."

Mr. Gordon seemed to waken out of a dream, and, looking vacantly at his wife, he replied—

"No thank you. I shall go to bed."

"Why, it is only seven, Richard!"

Again Mrs. Gordon spoke crossly, for she liked sitting up late and getting up late too, and she wanted her husband to go on with the novel he had begun reading aloud to her.

"Ah! to be sure, it is only seven, but it is very cold."

He shivered again, and again Mrs. Gordon was going to advise something hot, when a double knock was heard at the street door, and Mr. Gervoise was announced.

A tall and very handsome man, with flowing fair hair, gold spectacles, and a manner both grand and dignified, was shown in. He bowed most courteously to Mrs. Gordon, then turned to her husband.

"My dear Gordon, how are you?" he affectionately asked, looking at him from behind his shining glasses. "A little pale, I think."

"Mr. Gordon would not take the omnibus," began Mrs. Gordon.

"Ah! I see—just so—very naughty."

Mr. Gervoise sat down and looked hard at the master of the house. That gentleman seemed to wince under the gaze, and leaning his cheek on his hand, he stared at the carpet.

"Any news?" asked Mr. Gervoise, and as he spoke his strong French accent became more perceptible.

"I met Raby," replied Mr. Gordon with a start.

"Ah! our good friend Raby. And what did he say about me?"

Mr. Gordon did not seem to hear him, at least

he did not answer. When he raised his pale face it was to say, with a shudder,

“How cold it must be in Kensal Green to-night!”

A keen blast which blew round the cottage gave his words more force.

“I wish, Mr. Gordon, you would not be horrid!” entreated Mrs. Gordon, pettishly.

“I can see that our friend Gordon is not well,” emphatically said Mr. Gervoise. “Gordon, my good fellow, go to bed, sleep soundly, you will get up a new man to-morrow morning.”

Mr. Gordon rubbed his forehead thoughtfully, but, after a while, rose and said he would follow the advice; he felt cold, and would go to bed, as Mr. Gervoise suggested. So he bade them good night and retired. The door had scarcely closed upon him when Mr. Gervoise’s glasses beamed full upon Mrs. Gordon.

“I hope our friend has had no unpleasant news?” he said.

“Oh! dear, no.”

“He looks pale.”

“Oh! it is all coming along that endless Kensington Road, and not taking the omnibus. I don’t know, Mr. Gervoise, what made Mr. Gordon take this place, where we are quite out of the world, and I don’t see a soul. I get quite low at times, I assure you.”

"I thought London air was bad for you."

"I am never better than in London. But Mr. Gordon would bring me out here to this wilderness."

Mr. Gervoise was going to condole with Mrs. Gordon on this unfortunate obstinacy of Mr. Gordon's, when a sharp knock at the cottage door announced Miss Beatrice Gordon's return.

"Where is papa?" the tenants of the parlour heard her saying, and equally audible was Jane's answer.

"He is gone to bed, miss."

"Jane, you must not let her go up to Mr. Gordon, he is tired," said Mrs. Gordon, raising her voice; "come here, Beatrice."

The parlour door opened, and Beatrice Gordon, a small, dark child, with heavy curls, which she was ever tossing back, appeared on the threshold of the room. She drew back at once on seeing Mr. Gervoise.

"Good evening, my dear," he said graciously.

Beatrice did not answer.

"Come in and shake hands with Mr. Gervoise," said Mrs. Gordon; "well then," she added, crossly, as the child did not stir, "I wish you would shut the door, Beatrice, there is such a draught."

The door, which was noiselessly closed, was Beatrice's answer to her mother's request.

"She is so obstinate," sighed Mrs. Gordon; "just like her father in temper."

"And like her mother in person," politely said Mr. Gervoise; "a pretty child."

"No, she is not like me, Mr. Gervoise, we do not know whom the child is like; she is dark, and we are fair. Mr. Gordon will have it that she is like some one in his family who was called Beatrice some hundred years ago; but why *my* child should be called Beatrice, I never was able to understand. It is just like taking this cottage, forty pounds a year, and only three bedrooms."

Mr. Gervoise acknowledged the similarity of the evils, and, in the same breath, somewhat irrelevantly observed,

"And so you do not think Mr. Gordon has had unpleasant news?"

"Oh! dear, no," replied Mrs. Gordon, looking surprised at the suggestion; "he only came from the City."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Gervoise, with a start, "now you mention it, I have business in the city! Eight o'clock! Oh! I must be off, or I shall be late. Good evening, Mrs. Gordon; don't stir, and do not be uneasy about Gordon, a good night's rest will set him up again."

In vain Mrs. Gordon tried to detain him, again Mr. Gervoise assured her that Gordon would

be all right to-morrow ; and with this assurance he was gone.

Scarcely had the garden gate closed upon him, when the parlour door opened, and Beatrice made her appearance. She went up to her mother, and attempted to kiss her, but Mrs. Gordon pushed her away, and said, crossly :

“ I am very angry with you, Beatrice, and you know why.”

Beatrice did know why, so she did not question her mother, but sat down on a hassock and looked at the fire with much gravity.

“ You must go to bed,” said Mrs. Gordon, “ it is quite late.”

Beatrice generally objected to going to bed early, but knowing herself in the wrong this evening, she stole out of the parlour mute as a mouse, and crept up-stairs, followed by Jane. When they had reached the first floor, and Jane was opening the door of the child's bed-room, Beatrice, who had been watching her opportunity, made a dart forward, and was in her father's room in a moment. Fearful of waking her master, Jane did not dare to speak, whilst Beatrice, climbing up on a chair, reached the pillow on which his head lay, and softly kissed his pale face. Mr. Gordon was so fast asleep that he heard and felt nothing, and, withdrawing on tiptoe, Beatrice joined the servant,

thoroughly reckless of her whispered scolding. In the same spirit of magnanimous indifference she said her prayers, went to bed, and fell fast asleep, dreaming, as she often did, of an old red brick mansion, with four stone fountains, and noble trees, of which her father had told her many times.

Whilst both father and child slept up-stairs, Mrs. Gordon lay awake on the couch below, deploring Mr. Gordon's obstinacy, and the cottage and Beatrice's name, and her own hard lot. Twelve struck, when she rang for Jane, who was drowsily sewing by the kitchen fire, and requested to be helped up-stairs. We are bound to say that Mrs. Gordon was equal to going up the staircase alone, but neither the doctor nor her husband had been able to convince her of this fact. When she reached her room, Mrs. Gordon dismissed Jane, and she was vexed to find that, her husband being fast asleep, she could not murmur in her pretty, peevish way. Mr. Gordon was certainly following Mr. Gervoise's advice in a remarkable manner; he was sleeping so soundly, that Mrs. Gordon was surprised and, on second thoughts, glad. He had had bad nights of late; this would do him good. So she laid herself down very softly by his side, and was careful not to stir. But there was a part of Mr. Gervoise's advice which Mr. Gordon did

not follow. He did not waken a new man the next morning, for when the sun shone in at his window, Mr. Gordon lay cold and dead near his sleeping wife.

CHAPTER II.

“DIED of complaint of the heart.” Thus ran the verdict of the coroner’s jury. Another verdict was recorded in a wiser and a better world than this ; but the jury spoke according to their knowledge, and if this was human and limited, the blame rests not with them.

Mr. Gordon was buried in Kensal Green ; and there he sleeps to this day. A plain slab, “sacred to his memory,” and erected by his “sorrowing widow,” marks the spot, but neither tells the brief story of his life, nor mentions the cause of his death. Of one there was little to say ; of the other nothing certain was ever known, though in time something was conjectured.

Richard Gordon, Esq., was a Scotchman, of gentle and ancient blood. He inherited some thirty thousand pounds from his father, married for love a pretty girl, who had fifty pounds a year ; and having lost the best part of his capital in unsuccessful ventures, he found himself reduced to an

income which did not reach three hundred pounds. In this emergency Mr. Gordon showed judgment ; instead of going headlong to ruin by keeping up the establishment of a man who can spend his fifteen hundred yearly, "he left the world," as his wife said, crossly, and retired to a forty pound cottage in quiet Kensington.

The time was not yet gone when the London suburbs were pleasant places in their way. They had then fair wide streets, where carriage-wheels were heard at decent intervals ; broad roads, along which goodly stage-coaches and steady omnibuses bore their burdens to the City ; above all, they had quiet terraces, squares, cottages, and villas adorned with gardens, in which abode the world of retired tradesmen, decayed gentlewomen, shy artists, city men with large families, and of all people whose tastes and means forbade them the devouring Babylon. Then, too, green fields, a few mansions and their grounds, hawthorn hedges, and shady lanes gave these suburbs an attraction which they have now forsworn ; for then railways had not sent hissing engines across country, or spanned streets with bridges, and cabs, and porters, and traffic had not learned to crowd around noisy stations. Common-place were these suburbs, we grant, but they were calm and peaceful. They have given that up now ; they are but the edge of

the great City—an edge of brick and mortar, which once was green as any garland, and faded away pleasantly into the soft hazy blue of the horizon.

But though Mrs. Gordon's cottage was a pleasant and cheerful one, though it was convenient and cheap, the funeral was scarcely over when Mrs. Gordon assured Mr. Gervoise she could not stay in it. She had never liked it, and she hated it now. "It was the coming along that horrid Kensington Road which had killed her dear husband—she was sure it was."

This resolve Mrs. Gordon felt bound to mention to Mr. Gervoise, who was not merely one of the two trustees appointed by the late Mr. Gordon's will, but also the guardian of his only child.

"And Mr. Gervoise," she continued, plaintively, "I must sell all this furniture. We bought it to come to this horrid little cottage, which killed him, and I cannot bear the sight of it. And when you can let me have a hundred pounds or so, you will oblige me, Mr. Gervoise. The funeral and our mourning have taken all the ready money in the house."

"May I ask how much you have in hand, ma'am?"

"Five pounds."

"And is not your income soon due?"

"It is a half-yearly thing, not payable till March."

That is why I want a hundred pounds to go on with."

Mr. Gervoise played with his watch-guard, and said :

"I shall speak to Mr. Raby, ma'am."

"But why are there trustees?" asked Mrs. Gordon, a little crossly; "you know, Mr. Gervoise, I mean no reflection upon you, but I really think it strange my dear husband would not confide that paltry ten thousand to me. I am sure I gave him many proofs of my judgment, and as to marrying again——"

A burst of tears checked the rest.

"I shall speak to Mr. Raby," again said Mr. Gervoise; and leaving the back parlour, in which this conversation had taken place, he entered that in front, where Mr. Raby, the other trustee, was waiting. The table was heaped with papers; for the two gentlemen had emptied Richard Gordon's desk, and had had a long talk over its contents. Mr. Raby looked anxious and fidgety, and the look was that which was most aversive to his countenance.

Mr. Raby, a childless widower in easy circumstances, was also a middle-aged man with dull blue eyes, flabby cheeks, a thick utterance, and a moderate share of intellect. He was born to pass easily and lazily through life, and especially to shun all its troubles. He often wondered that he had ever

married ; he did not know, he said, how he came to do it. And still more did he wonder how he had been so foolishly weak as to let Richard Gordon get over him, and make a trustee of him. Ten times at least had he expressed that wonder to Mr. Gervoise in the course of the morning ; and if he did not greet him now with another wondering exclamation to the same purport, it was that he felt rather too anxious to know what Mr. Gervoise was going to say. Mr. Gervoise sat down, and said nothing.

“ Well ? ” asked Mr. Raby.

“ Well, Mrs. Gordon has five pounds.”

“ Are there any debts ? ”

“ No—none.”

Mr. Raby sighed with evident relief, and said it was a great comfort.

“ Well, but what are we trustees for ? ” indignantly asked Mr. Gervoise ; “ where is the property ?—where are the ten thousand pounds ? ”

“ Gordon was always a close fellow,” said Mr. Raby ; “ he told me he had ten thousand pounds at his banker’s, and, with the most unaccountable weakness, although Doctor Jones warned me it would be my death, I became a trustee ; however, the property is gone, and with it our trust—for where there is no property, there is neither trouble nor responsibility.”

But if some people dislike trouble and responsibility, some other people like them, and to this latter class Mr. Gervoise evidently belonged. He leaned back in his chair, played with his pen, and said at length :

“Are you sure the balance is no more than sixty pounds?”

“Quite sure.”

Mr. Gervoise took his pen, made up the amount once more, and ascertained that sixty pounds, five shillings, and three pence was the exact amount Richard Gordon had died worth.

“I am quite amazed!” said Mr. Gervoise; “I understood there was property, large property coming in.”

“Oh! that was all moonshine,” replied Mr. Raby. “Poor Gordon was always dreaming about that property. Why, there are three lives between it and his daughter. No, there is no fear of your being ever troubled with anything of the kind. I am out of it, being only a trustee; but you, as guardian, might be apprehensive, of course.”

This explanation did not satisfy Mr. Gervoise.

“I am amazed,” he said again; “amazed and displeased. I must say I think it was treacherous of poor Gordon to inveigle me in this matter. I must say I think it very mysterious that he should draw out the money the day after

signing his will—very mysterious. Perhaps the money is not gone, and will turn up some day.”

This suggestion seemed to alarm Mr. Raby.

“My dear Mr. Gervoise,” he said eagerly, “let us do anything for that poor lady and her child, but pray let us have done with this horrid trust. I am quite willing to lay down a hundred pounds to help to set her up, poor thing! She might open a little school.”

“Well, I can suggest it to her,” said Mr. Gervoise, after a while.

“Ay! do,” still eagerly said Mr. Raby, who was most anxious to get out of the house before Mrs. Gordon should know how matters stood; “and as I may have to go out of town soon, I had better give you that check at once.”

To this proposal Mr. Gervoise assented. Mr. Raby wrote out and signed the check, handed it to Mr. Gervoise, and with a sigh of relief stole out of the cottage, whilst his fellow-trustee entered the back parlour, in which Mrs. Gordon sat waiting.

“My dear madam,” formally said Mr. Gervoise, “I am grieved to be the bearer of unpleasant tidings, but I daresay you are partly prepared for them.”

This speech bore but one meaning to Mrs. Gordon’s mind. She could not leave the cottage, she could not sell the furniture, and she could not

have the hundred pounds. She looked blank and irritated, but did not speak.

"I suppose," continued Mr. Gervoise, "you can give us no clue to the missing ten thousand pounds?"

"What!" said Mrs. Gordon, faintly.

"We find none," calmly continued Mr. Gervoise; "the day after making his will, Mr. Gordon withdrew from his bankers the large sum mentioned in it; and how he disposed of that sum, neither Mr. Raby nor I can ascertain."

"But the money must be found!" cried Mrs. Gordon; "it must!"

"Well, I trust it may, ma'am. However, it is a mysterious affair. Mr. Raby and I have searched your husband's papers, and we have found nothing but a memorandum, which agrees with the banker's account, namely, that the balance in that gentleman's hands is sixty pounds, five shillings, and three pence. This, I am sorry to say, is the whole amount of the trust left to us. Mr. Raby and I have agreed that it would be ridiculous to invest such a trifle for the benefit of your daughter, and we will accordingly keep it for any pressing necessity."

"But it is impossible—we cannot live upon that; there must be something else!" cried poor Mrs. Gordon.

"There is nothing else, I am sorry to say ; but Mr Raby and I have put our heads together, and if opening a small school or letting furnished lodgings and taking in a boarder will answer you, we will do our best for the widow of our valued friend."

Mrs. Gordon remained mute. She could not realize that terrible calamity, ruin. The sense of loss is one of the slowest to come to us, so keen is our love of possession, so bitter do we find it to have no more that which has once been ours. She had seen the bank-notes on the day when her husband took this wreck of his fortune to the banker's, and she could not believe that these faithless servants had deserted her in the hour of need.

"But, Mr. Gervoise, it can't be !" she said pitifully.

"I wish it could not be, indeed ; but, as I said, Mr. Raby and I will assist you in any of the plans I have suggested. I will not press you for an answer to-day. I can see your mind is not equal to it, but I shall call again in a few days, and then I trust I shall find you in a truly Christian and resigned frame of mind."

With this edifying speech, Mr. Gervoise left his friend's widow. The door had scarcely closed upon him, when Beatrice, who had been sitting unheeded in a corner of the room, and whose red eyes told of

bitter childish tears, crept up to her mother.

“ Oh, my poor darling, what shall we do !” cried Mrs. Gordon, “ what shall we do ! Your father has left us beggars ! what *shall* we do !”

“ Don’t cry,” whispered Beatrice, looking by no means alarmed at the prospect of beggary thus held forth ; “ I shall work for you.”

CHAPTER III.

It was only after ransacking the cottage in search of the missing money that Mrs. Gordon came to the bitter conclusion that it was really gone, and that she was really left with fifty pounds a-year—that is to say, just what would pay her rent and taxes. And how was she to live? That dear Richard had done something dreadful with the money was plain, and so she told Mr. Gervoise when he called. He came to know, and he said so, what Mrs. Gordon had decided upon. Instead of answering the question, Mrs. Gordon at once entered on the subject uppermost in her thoughts.

“I am sure some designing villain must have got round dear Richard,” she said; “some wretch who advised a safe investment. My poor husband was always credulous, and would not confide in my better judgment.”

“Very sad,” replied Mr. Gervoise; “but on which of my suggestions are you prepared to act, Mrs.

Gordon, for I know you have too much judgment to lose time."

"I cannot afford it, and I have resolved to take in daily pupils," replied Mrs. Gordon, to whom this resolve had come within the last five minutes, as, sitting near the parlour-window, she saw a little girl pass by on her way to school.

Mr. Gervoise expressed his approbation of the plan, and again informing her that Mr. Raby and he had laid their heads together, he handed her a twenty pound note, wished her every success, begged of her to write at once if she discovered the missing money, and left her, saying that he was going into the country and would stay there some time.

Armed with twenty pounds sterling, Mrs. Gordon began her battle with the world. She called the cottage Rosemary Cottage, and sent round circulars, in which she expressed her willingness to take in eight young ladies as daily pupils, and one as a parlour boarder. A good-natured tradesman sent his two little girls at the end of a fortnight; three more came before six weeks were out, and there stopped Mrs. Gordon's good fortune. Scarlatina appeared in Rosemary Cottage; one child took it and died, the others fled, and Mrs. Gordon's school was at an end.

She wrote to Mr. Gervoise, who coldly an-

swered that, as the school had proved a failure, she must try furnished lodgings; and he enclosed another twenty pounds, with a hint that Mrs. Gordon had better make it go as far as she could.

For the first time since her husband's death, Mrs. Gordon felt bitterness against him. Furnished lodgings! A bill in her parlour window! She surely could not sink deeper! But necessity is a hard master, and Mrs. Gordon submitted to its teaching. The bill was put up, and it had not been hanging two days when a fashionable man and a handsome woman secured Mrs. Gordon's best bedroom and parlour for twenty-five shillings a week. They stayed a month, then walked out one morning without notice, and several pounds in Mrs. Gordon's debt for rent and breakfast, tea, and other necessities supplied. How they had removed their luggage undetected Mrs. Gordon never knew; but she strongly suspected that they had conveyed it out overnight through the parlour window.

"But then one ought to have heard it coming down-stairs, ma'am," said Jane.

"Oh! if everthing were as it ought to be," replied Mrs. Gordon, with some asperity, "I should not be letting furnished lodgings."

Her next venture, an old bachelor, was more for-

tunate. Mr. Mathews paid punctually, but, alas ! he gave a world of trouble. He was the most exacting, groaning and grumbling of lodgers. He scolded Jane and Mrs. Gordon herself. At length the same house could no longer hold them both ; and they parted by mutual consent, and to their mutual satisfaction.

“ If I were to beg my bread, I should not regret Mr. Mathews,” said Mrs. Gordon, as the door closed on her departing lodger.

He went, and he was the last of his race that darkened the threshold of Rosemary Cottage. Again Mrs. Gordon lived upon hope, and again, when hope grew faint and weak, she wrote to Mr. Gervoise. His answer was prompt and short. Mrs. Gordon had better give up the cottage, sell part of the furniture, take a cheap second floor, and apprentice Beatrice to some useful and genteel trade. This advice he strengthened by twenty-five pounds. But Mrs. Gordon had conceived a sudden affection for the cottage she had once hated. She felt very loth to part with the furniture she had been so anxious to sell—besides, to 'prentice Beatrice ! This was worse than having a bill up in the parlour-window ! Mrs. Gordon resolved never to submit to such degradation ; but as people must live, be they ever so genteel, the poor lady, rendered energetic by necessity, tried teaching and

fancy work. With time she got one music lesson, and some orders for crochet, and again she struggled on.

Jane had to be dismissed, as a matter of course, and now it was that Beatrice redeemed her promise of working for her mother. Beatrice became a first-rate housemaid, and no mean cook. She bent all her energy and her intellect, and with both she was amply provided, in mastering the elements of domestic lore. Beatrice's bargains were ever a wonder to her mother; how she cheapened fish and vegetables, and got round the butcher, was more than that poor lady could understand. But Beatrice did it, and moreover Beatrice could keep a house clean, and make a pudding, and—rare art!—cook a mutton-chop, and boil potatoes. But these useful accomplishments brought in no money; and as the music lesson went abroad, and the house that gave the crochet-work withdrew its orders, Mrs. Gordon looked out for a few little trinkets, and found her way to the pawnbroker's. She once thought of writing to Mr. Gervoise, but she remembered that he had advised her to 'prentice Beatrice, and she did not do it.

Mr. Gordon had been dead a year or more. Winter was nearly over, but the bleak wind still blew drearily round the cottage at night, and reminded Mrs. Gordon of the fatal evening when

her husband went up to his room for the last time. Oh ! how dreadful and weary had been that year ! How bitter and dark looked the future ! Debts small but numerous seemed to enclose the poor widow in a net of iron. She would willingly have given up the cottage now ; but how could she, when she owed half a year's rent ? She would gladly have parted with the furniture, but would not that have been alarming the landlord ? Removing to a cheaper neighbourhood was out of the question, for similar reasons ; a host of small and uneasy tradesmen watched all Mrs. Gordon's movements, and she was too proud and too honest for surreptitious flight.

"I knew this cottage would be the death of me," she said one afternoon to Beatrice. "I told your poor father so, but he would not believe me. It was his death, and now it will be mine."

Mrs. Gordon was lying on the sofa, and Beatrice, sitting on a hassock on the hearth, was watching a saucepanful of potatoes boiling on the parlour fire. They were too poor to afford coals in the kitchen, and, as visitors were unknown at Rosemary Cottage, they stood in no fear of the world and its proprieties.

Beatrice had too often heard her mother speak of the cottage as the cause of her decease, to be alarmed at the declaration, but she knew why Mrs. Gordon

was so low-spirited, and her smooth brow took lines of premature care.

"If I could see any issue to this misery," resumed Mrs. Gordon. "But there is none. Debts, horrid debts, people watching and dunning you! Oh! dear, I wish we were both dead, Beatrice!"

Beatrice's little lips began to quiver, but her potatoes were boiling fast, so she checked the coming tears, and watched for the first crack in their brown skins.

"If even—" began Mrs. Gordon. A loud double knock at the cottage door interrupted her. "Take up the potatoes," she cried, in terror; "put them away, child."

"Where?" asked Beatrice, with the saucepan in her hand.

"Anywhere, child. Be quick!"

Beatrice looked around her. The chintz sofa on which her mother was lying had a deep valance to it. Beatrice hastily thrust the saucepan behind this providential screen, and rubbing her poor little soiled hands along her rusty black frock, she went and opened the door. Mr. Gervoise stood on the threshold, grand, courteous, benevolent, and smiling—his very glasses had kindness in them.

"How *do* you do, my love? and how is dear mamma?" he asked, patting Beatrice's brown head. "Not unwell, I hope?"

As Beatrice did not answer, Mr. Gervoise's anxiety was not relieved until he entered the parlour, where he found Mrs. Gordon slowly rising from the sofa to receive him.

"My dear Mrs. Gordon," he said, tenderly, "how naughty you have been ! I have been most anxious about you. Why did you not write?"

Mrs. Gordon shook her head. She had not written because she had had nothing to say.

Mr. Gervoise sat down on the sofa near her, and bending confidentially forwards, looked full in Mrs. Gordon's face.

"How have you been getting on?" he asked, taking her hand, and patting it affectionately. "Come, tell me all about it. I can see you have been fretting."

"I have had my trials," replied Mrs. Gordon, a little coldly, "and I have borne with them."

"With that fortitude which I witnessed a year ago!" sighed Mr. Gervoise. "But we will not renew the painful subject. I am so glad, my dear Mrs. Gordon, you have not given up the cottage, though I believe I advised you to do so. But it would have been a pity," and Mr. Gervoise looked around him with benevolent admiration.

This concession to her superior judgment softened Mrs. Gordon considerably. Her heart was one that readily opened to the least touch of

kindness. With a sigh, she entered on the long story of her troubles and trials, of which that cottage was the first cause.

"Ah! to be sure, just so!" soothingly remarked Mr. Gervoise, every now and then. "As you very justly say, it is a great drawback to live so much out of the world. I suppose you see very few people?"

"I gave up the world on coming here; the Martins have left the neighbourhood. I see no one but that child, who is an angel, Mr. Gervoise!"

Poor little Beatrice! she did not look much of an angel, in her worn-out frock, and with her unkempt locks hanging about her little soiled face, on which sat a sulky frown; but her guardian smiled kindly at her, whilst he said to her mother:

"It is most injurious to the human mind to live thus in solitude; but, of course, you see the papers?"

"Never. We gave up the *Times* when my husband died, and I do not know if I have opened a newspaper since."

"Mrs. Gordon," cried Mr. Gervoise, struck with a sudden brilliant thought, "why do not you advertise for a boarder?"

"You forget the risk, Mr. Gervoise."

"Oh! but a substantial boarder is no risk."

"Mr. Mathews was not a boarder," sighed Mrs.

Gordon; "but what I endured with that man——"

"Do not mention it," interrupted Mr. Gervoise; "but I do not mean anything like Mr. Mathews, of course not."

"I could not," said Mrs. Gordon. "I would beg my bread first!"

"Out of the question. No, my meaning is this: will you take a boarder from me—a widower and his son, a lad of fourteen?"

"You do not mean——" said Mrs. Gordon, much fluttered.

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Gordon. I am coming to board with you—with my son Gilbert. No objections—it is agreed upon."

Mrs. Gordon faltered her acknowledgments, and Mr. Gervoise slipped a folded paper in her hand.

"I know you will be anxious to make us comfortable," he whispered; "we can settle afterwards."

Mrs. Gordon was overwhelmed with gratitude, but with the true instinct of modest benevolence, Mr. Gervoise rose hastily and took a precipitate leave.

"Don't mention it—don't mention it!" he said hurriedly, as she followed him to the door, and, with less ceremony than usual, he cut short his leave-taking.

As soon as she came back to the parlour, Mrs. Gordon opened the paper. She found that it contained a short list of instructions and necessities, and, what she could not help thinking more to the purpose, a ten-pound note.

"If ever there was an angel upon earth!" said Mrs. Gordon, raising her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I detest Mr. Gervoise!" interrupted Beatrice, clenching her tiny hands, and her black eyes flashing.

"You detest your guardian! Why, child, what has he ever done to you?" asked Mrs. Gordon, even more surprised than indignant.

Now, it was very true that Mr. Gervoise had never been guilty of the least unkindness towards his ward. Beatrice could not tax him with a wrong look or a wrong word, yet she hated, and had always hated, Mr. Gervoise.

"I ask why you dislike your guardian?" imperatively inquired Mrs. Gordon.

"Because he wears glasses," impetuously replied Beatrice, unable to get hold of a better reason; and bursting into tears, she drew the saucepan from its hiding-place, recklessly dragging it along the carpet.

"How dare you, miss!" indignantly inquired Mrs. Gordon. "Leave the room, and take down that saucepan to the kitchen, directly."

Beatrice checked her tears and obeyed. The door closed upon her, and Mrs. Gordon sighed as she looked at the carpet.

“Oh! dear, what a worry children will be!” she murmured, sinking down on the sofa.

CHAPTER IV.

THE very next morning, so great and laudable was his desire to benefit Mrs. Gordon by the presence of a substantial boarder in her house, Mr. Gervoise made his appearance at Rosemary Cottage. He came accompanied by a lad of fourteen, whom he was very anxious to introduce at once to Beatrice; but Beatrice was downstairs with a charwoman, whom Mrs. Gordon had called in to give the cottage a Spring cleaning; and as she was not a very docile child, neither her mother's orders nor her entreaties could make Beatrice leave that refuge. Again she said that she detested Mr. Gervoise, and in this declaration she was kind enough to include his son Gilbert.

Mrs. Gordon left her in great indignation, and went back to Mr. Gervoise, to whom she made the best apology she could; "but a more obstinate child does not exist," she said; "she is just like her poor father."

"If the mountain will not go to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain," gaily replied Mr. Gervoise. "Gilbert, go down to the kitchen and get acquainted with that obstinate young damsel. This is my French son," he added, nodding to Mrs. Gordon, who nodded in return.

Mr. Gervoise was a Frenchman, a native of that cool green Normandy which faces England, which conquered it eight hundred years ago, was long linked with it, and has some features in common with it still. Soon after his first wife's death, Mr. Gervoise left France and settled in Kent. He wanted, he said, to become an Englishman. England and her domestic life had always fascinated him. There was nothing like it in France. Marriage was not understood in that benighted country. It was a farce, a drama, a tragedy—never marriage!

Mr. Gervoise had a son by his French wife, but he longed to mingle his blood with that of England. He married a blooming Miss Emilia Thorne, took the oath of allegiance, had another son by her, and became a widower a year before his friend Mr. Gordon died.

This was how Mr. Gervoise had a French and an English son. The latter was now in France, in order to acquire the language of the country, and the former had been in Eng-

land some time for the same excellent purpose.

Beatrice was picking fruit for a pudding in the kitchen. Her back was turned to the door, and as she was intent on her task, she neither saw nor heard Gilbert Gervoise until he stood close behind her. She thought at first it was Mrs. Greene, who had gone upstairs, but when he coughed gently, she turned round quickly, and for a while remained mute.

Gilbert Gervoise was fair, like his father, and, like him, very handsome. He had blue eyes, both bright and pensive, a clear complexion, flowing fair hair, and a winning smile. Beatrice was literally dazzled with his beauty, and she was fascinated too by the genial goodness of his countenance. Her resolve to hate Mr. Gervoise's son melted away from her—she did not know why. She struggled, however, against the gentle feeling, and frowning, asked the intruder what he wanted.

“To help you,” he promptly replied.

“Can you make a pudding?” she ironically inquired.

Gilbert shook his head, and said “No.”

“Well, then, you are of no use.”

“Oh! I can do what you are doing.”

He began picking the fruit with a dexterity which awakened the two opposite feelings of jealousy and admiration in Beatrice's heart; but ad-

miration won the day, and on its steps followed liking sudden and true. It was despotic liking indeed, with "do this," and "do that," but Gilbert seemed amused and proved obedient. When the fruit was picked, he asked,

"Have you got a garden?"

"Yes; come up, I will show it to you."

The garden was a square patch, with more weeds than flowers in it, and Gilbert said so.

"We can't afford flowers," replied Beatrice, gravely; "we are very poor, you know. Oh! how I wish I could earn money," she added vehemently; "money for poor mamma, you know."

Gilbert looked thoughtful, then said confidentially:

"I have a napoleon—that would not do, would it?"

"Oh! no; besides, I would not take it; but still I wish I could earn money."

"Money!" ejaculated Mr. Gervoise, who had stolen upon them unseen, and had been listening; "you must not be thinking so much about money."

Beatrice gave him a shy, displeased look, but did not reply. Mr. Gervoise took a sovereign out of his pocket and showed it to her.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "that this has any particular value in itself? Not in the least,

child. It has a conventional value, and is used as a means of exchange ; in reality, my dear, it is trash."

Having uttered this philosophical sentiment, Mr. Gervoise put the sovereign back in his pocket, and walked into the back parlour, where he had left Mrs. Gordon sitting.

"My dear madam," he said, in his grand courteous way—and Mr. Gervoise certainly had fine manners—"our dear children are already devoted to one another. See how Gilbert has passed his arm around Beatrice's waist, and how she looks up at him, and how he looks down at her. It is quite affecting. I confess to you that I indulge in very delightful anticipations."

Now though Mr. Gervoise was not a rich man, he was comfortable, and Gilbert would certainly be an excellent match for Beatrice. Mrs. Gordon's tears nearly flowed at the father's suggestion.

"I see we understand one another," affectionately said Mr. Gervoise ; "we will leave it to time, my dear lady—we will leave it to time."

And so will we leave this story to time, or at least to that portion of it which is comprised within one week. Rosemary Cottage was another place now. Comfort, good living—Mr. Gervoise paid liberally, and expected what he called a moderate and nutritious table—two servants, ready money,

and new clothes had wrought a great change in Mrs. Gordon's feelings and appearance. She looked happy, and certainly was lively. Beatrice, too, was altered. She had given up her domestic avocations, and was now a gaily-attired little lady, who romped about the Kensington lanes with Gilbert—ah! what a green world they were then!—or played at home with him in the back parlour, while Mr. Gervoise and Mrs. Gordon, who had a great deal of business in the way of accounts, sat talking it over in the front room.

In that front room Mrs. Gordon was left alone one evening, exactly a week after Mr. Gervoise had become her boarder. He was delightful during dinner time, but no sooner was the meal over than he rose, evidently to go out. Mrs. Gordon looked surprised. Mr. Gervoise explained, he had a friend in Bayswater with whom he must spend part of the evening—a tiresome business interview. The friend's wife had deserted him, and taken three out of the five children.

"How dreadful!" said Mrs. Gordon.

"Human nature," indulgently said Mr. Gervoise.

"But how kind of you to go out on this inclement night," said Mrs. Gordon.

It was a very severe night indeed, keen and bitter.

"My dear Madam, we must assist one another

in this world. Our life is but short, let us do as much good as we can."

"What a man!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Gordon, as the door closed on her boarder. But her opinion of Mr. Gervoise's benevolence naturally increased when the cook came in with the tidings that she had seen him down in Kensington entering a City omnibus. At first Mrs. Gordon was puzzled, for Kensington and Bayswater are rather apart, and the city lies at a tolerable distance from either; then she grew doubtful, though cook was obstinate. Finally, she concluded that Mr. Gervoise had met a messenger at the door, with tidings that induced him to alter his direction, and so the good man had actually gone off to the City in this trying weather.

Mr. Gervoise went no farther than Holborn. There he alighted, and made his way to Great Ormond Street. "Houses have no great value here," thought Mr. Gervoise, examining keenly this street, which, after being the resort of the polite and the courtly, has now rather fallen down in the world. "And this is the house, is it?" He stopped before one of the oldest houses, and, looking at it closely, concluded that it was not one of the best. A gas lamp showed him that it was somewhat out of repair, also that it had a dreary uninhabited look. "No curtains," thought Mr.

Gervoise, glancing at the closed shutters, and, instead of knocking, he gently touched the area bell. A rough-looking man-servant came out of the kitchen into the area with a light, looked up, nodded at Mr. Gervoise, then disappeared. In a few moments the door opened, and the same rough-looking man admitted the visitor.

The hall of this house was not the narrow passage dignified with the name of the modern London house. It was spacious, circular, and lofty. Mr. Gervoise looked around him with an inquiring and searching glance.

"So this is the town house," he said.

The servant nodded.

"It smells mouldy, John."

"It is mouldy," said John.

"Where is Mrs. Scot?"

"Upstairs with master."

"Can I go up?"

"Ah, yes, you can go up," was John's very unceremonious reply.

And up a broad and gloomy staircase Mr. Gervoise went. The house, which looked dreary without, was dull, dark, and silent within. It was a very dismal house, to say the least of it. A door on the first floor landing stood open; Mr. Gervoise looked in cautiously. A lamp was burning in a wide, cold-looking room, with furniture two hun-

dred years old and more, but which had nothing save its antiquity to recommend it. A door facing him stood ajar, and thence proceeded low murmuring sounds of talking. Mr. Gervoise entered, crossed the uncarpeted floor with a light footstep, and entered the second room without knocking. It was as dreary-looking as the first, but it had a fire, and it was tenanted; a pale old man sat bending over the grate, and behind his arm-chair stood a woman past fifty, and of stern and forbidding aspect. She slowly turned round as Mr. Gervoise entered, and fixed upon him a large and subtle black eye.

"Who's that?" inquired the old man, looking up sharply; "is it John?"

"No, it is not John," mildly replied Mr. Gervoise.

"Ah! Mr. Gervoise, I am glad to see you. It is very kind of you to come to me."

"Do not mention it; thank you, Mrs. Scot," and Mr. Gervoise took the chair which Mrs. Scot handed him, after looking at her master.

"Yes, Mrs. Scot, you can go. Will you have a glass of wine, Mr. Gervoise?"

"Thanks, I have but just dined."

The old man sighed; Mrs. Scot closed the door, and a long silence followed.

"Mr. Carnoosie——" began Mr. Gervoise.

"Yes, it is Mr. Carnoosie now," said the old man; "but there has been a tittle in the family. I used to think of getting it revived, but that is over now."

"Very sad!" murmured Mr. Gervoise.

"Two such boys!—two such fine boys!"

"Very sad!" said Mr. Gervoise again, and another long silence followed.

"I suppose you know what I came to town for?" resumed Mr. Carnoosie.

"On business, I presume."

"Just so—undertaker's business. I came to make my will."

"Loads of time for that," cheerfully said Mr. Gervoise, "loads of time."

"There is time, but no more than time."

"We shall never agree on that subject," said Mr. Gervoise, still brisk and cheerful; "never, my dear sir."

Mr. Carnoosie looked at him fixedly. This old man had a pale and feeble face, but it was also a face in which mistrust was written—the mistrust of the weak.

"Mr. Gervoise," he said a little peevishly, "I wish you would not speak so—you don't believe a word of it,"

Mr. Gervoise laughed heartily.

"Very good!" he said; "very good!"

"Don't," said the old man with a start, "don't laugh, for mercy's sake!"

At once Mr. Gervoise was mute, and there followed another long pause.

"What dreary rooms!" thought Mr. Gervoise, looking round him; "and a poor house, too—not one good picture in it. I suppose that japanned cabinet is worth something, though; one could get it cleaned and varnished."

"Well," said Mr. Carnoosie, "I came to town to make my will, and as you have agreed to be trustee——"

"Excuse me if I interrupt you," said Mr. Gervoise, "but you know on what terms I have agreed to be trustee. No legacy, no remembrance—nothing, in short."

"I have a diamond ring——"

"If it were the Kooh-i-noor I would not accept of it."

"Well, as you please. But, as I said, you have agreed to be trustee, and as I am afraid there is a minor in this case——"

"A minor!" interrupted Mr. Gervoise, "Mr. Gordon is not a minor."

"I can't make up my mind to leave it to him," said Mr. Carnoosie, without looking at Mr. Gervoise; "I never liked the man, and he has turned papist."

"A vile calumny, my dear sir! He is incapable, utterly incapable of abjuring the religion of his ancestors."

"Well, then, he is a Presbyterian, and a predestinarian."

"He is a Scotch Episcopalian," sententiously said Mr. Gervoise.

"He may be what he likes," crossly replied Mr. Carnoosie, "I never liked him, and he shall not have old Carnoosie."

"Then I suppose Mr. Mortimer——"

"Mortimer! the radical! the penny-a-liner!—no!"

"Then the estate goes to charities. A noble deed—a noble deed."

"Damn the charities!" angrily said Mr. Carnoosie; "do you think I am going to have a set of beggars down at Carnoosie?"

"Well, it would be a pity."

"I'll burn the house first!"

"No need to do that, eh? No need."

"No, sir, no need whilst a child of poor Joseph's is alive, as I learned the other day, and that has brought me down."

Mr. Gervoise looked hard at the fire.

"The boy lives with his mother down in Plough Lane, Kensington. You know Kensington?"

"I have been there," quietly replied Mr. Gervoise.

"Well, what I want from you is this, Mr. Gervoise. I want you to see the widow and the child, and to give me some account of both—you understand?"

"Quite well. But if you were to see them yourself, my dear sir."

"I will not!—I will not!" interrupted Mr. Carnoosie, in a wailing tone. "I will not see and have them speculating on the old man's death. No," he added, in an altered voice, "you must do that for me—please do it; I ask for no more."

"My dear sir, I will do what you please. Plough Lane, you said?"

"Yes; here is a letter the widow wrote to my solicitor."

He handed him a shabby-looking letter, which Mr. Gervoise surveyed with every appearance of profound interest, then carefully put away in an elegant Morocco pocket-book.

"I shall see about it to-morrow early," he said, "and bring you my account to-morrow afternoon. Will that do?"

"Yes, that will do, thank you. You are sure you will not take a glass of wine?"

"Quite sure," replied Mr. Gervoise, rising and taking the hint to go. "Good night, Mr. Car-

noosie. Take care of yourself, my dear sir, and don't stay too long in this old house; it would shorten your days."

"It matters little, Mr. Gervoise—very little. After all, I have outlived two such boys! noble boys!"

"Very sad!" said Mr. Gervoise, sympathetically; "good night. Shall I send up Mrs. Scot?"

"Ay, do, if you please. Good night."

Mr. Gervoise softly stole out of the room, and had not the trouble of sending up Mrs. Scot. He found her sitting in the outer room, not so near the door as to be charged with listening; but not so far away either as not to have heard part, if not the whole, of the conversation between himself and her master. Mr. Gervoise beckoned her mysteriously out on the landing. With little alacrity, Mrs. Scot obeyed the signal, and followed him to the head of the staircase.

"Mrs. Scot," whispered Mr. Gervoise, "who is that new heir?"

"He's dead, sir; it is the child."

"A minor—a ward in chancery, I suppose. Mrs. Scot, take a friend's advice; secure your position—secure your position, I say."

"It's thirty pounds a-year, sir; I know it already."

"Thirty pounds a-year for your long and

faithful services! I must interfere, Mrs. Scot."

"Then you'll make it twenty, sir," very drily replied Mrs. Scot. "That's Mr. Carnoosie's way."

Mr. Gervoise raised his hands, and went downstairs in mute indignation, whilst Mrs. Scot went back to her master.

"Mrs. Scot," he said, feebly, "what did Mr. Gervoise say to you?"

"He said you looked but poorly, sir. I told him it was the fretting."

"You call it fretting. Oh! it is not that, Mrs. Scot. It is moaning and grieving one's very life away. It is sleeping, waking, and living in sorrow."

"Yes, sir; that is what I call fretting."

Mrs. Scot's voice, as she said this, was harsh and cold, and very different indeed from Mr. Gervoise's soft and sympathetic "very sad!"

"But he has boys," thought Mr. Carnoosie; "two boys, and she has none; a cold, heartless, childless woman!"

Such as she was, however, he could not do without her presence. There had been a time when that presence had been pleasant to him, for another motive than hatred of solitude; a time when both were young, and the stern housekeeper was not without her share of beauty. In those days Mrs. Scot had had ambitious dreams, doomed to cruel

disappointment. Her master had proved faithless, and married a girl of his own rank and station ; a handsome girl, who gave him two sons, and died in her bloom. Still more deeply was Mrs. Scot's revenge to be worked out. The two boys perished in one fatal accident, and their father never recovered the blow. Decrepit before his time, he wandered about his deserted mansion a living sorrow. Disease soon stepped in and seized him, and he had now come to London to make his will, and dispose of that property which was not to go down to children of his blood. Ay, truly Mrs. Scot was avenged ; but the vengeance, not unwished for, perhaps, though unsought, cost her dear. Thirty pounds a-year for youth and beauty, a hope and half a lifetime ; such was her present value in the eyes of that master who once had followed her as her shadow. If, as they sat thus together in the dreary room of the London house, he thought her cold and heartless, what did she think him ?

CHAPTER V.

CURIOSITY was one of Mrs. Gordon's venial sins. The next morning she could not resist the temptation of telling Mr. Gervoise that cook had seen him down in Kensington. On principle, Mr. Gervoise never told his business to any one. He accordingly put on a look of great surprise, and said that cook must have been mistaken—he hoped so at least; for, as he was not in Kensington, he should really feel alarmed at having been seen there—it would look like second sight, and could only be the forerunner of disaster or death. Mrs. Gordon shuddered, and begged he would not mention it.

No more was said on the subject, and after breakfast Mr. Gervoise went out. This time he did not say where he was going, so that cook should have no tales to tell; but as caution is practical wisdom, Mr. Gervoise took a brisk walk near Holland House, then slipped down a silent and

lonely lane, and finally entered Plough Lane, and found himself near a group of small, mean dwellings. He singled out one which was rather meaner than the rest. It had a most untidy garden in front, and a dirty parlour window, in which hung a bill of "Mangling Done," and near it another bill with "A Room to Let" upon it; and above this two first-floor windows adorned with ragged curtains. At the door of this promising abode Mr. Gervoise stopped and rang; a voice within cried out, "Never mind, Mrs. Smith, I'll attend to the door," and the words were scarcely uttered, when a fresh-coloured and very pretty young woman opened the door, and stood before Mr. Gervoise, with a baby in her arms, and two rosy children peeping at the stranger from behind their mother's skirts. Mr. Gervoise gave the baby a keen look, then he surveyed the mother from head to foot; then he said, in his grand way:

"Madam, I come to pay you some money which I owe your husband."

"Perhaps you'll not mind walking up-stairs, sir," civilly said the young woman; and she showed him up a dark stair-case into one of the front rooms.

It was poorly furnished, and Mr. Gervoise's quick eye at once caught sight of a working man's jacket hanging on a peg behind the door; but

resolutely turning his back to it as well as to the baby's cradle, he took out his purse, and said :

"The amount is thirty-two shillings. Will you be kind enough to give me a receipt, madam?"

"My husband had better do that when he comes in," replied the young woman.

"When he comes in!—do you mean to say, madam, that he has returned from Australia?"

Every drop of blood seemed to forsake the young woman's cheeks.

"He's dead, sir," she faltered at length.

"Dead! How long has he been dead, pray?"

"Two years, sir."

"I heard from him six months ago," said Mr. Gervoise.

Stupor and despair appeared in the poor young thing's face.

"You don't mean to say you are married again?" cried Mr. Gervoise, suddenly struck with the fact.

"Don't ruin me, sir!" she entreated, "don't! indeed I thought he was dead—indeed I did!"

"My dear young creature," kindly said Mr. Gervoise, "I have not the least wish to ruin you; only, after giving myself a world of trouble to find you out, I perceive I cannot pay this thirty-two shillings to you."

So saying, Mr. Gervoise put his purse in his pocket.

"But what am I to do, sir?" asked the young woman, looking thoroughly bewildered; "what am I to do?"

"It is awkward," replied Mr. Gervoise; "the diggings are awkward. They take and swallow men up, and either keep them altogether, or turn them up at the wrong time. It is very awkward, and I am sure Mr. Carnoosie, through whom I got your direction, is too humane and too judicious to torment you on this subject."

"And what right has he to torment me?" cried the young woman, flushing up. "I married a gentleman, and I paid dear for it. I was deserted with a poor baby in arms, and if it were not for my present husband, both my child and myself might have starved. What did Mr. Carnoosie ever do for me that he should torment me now?"

"I am afraid he has the right," quietly said Mr. Gervoise; "but I do not think he has the inclination. May I ask your present husband's name?"

"Grant, sir. I am not ashamed of it. Thomas Grant, carpenter, and a better husband never was. As fond of my children as if they were his own."

"Very touching, very; and, after all, matters may not be so bad, you know. The wrong one

may die, and so on. Shall I call again, if I get more positive news—for he may be dead now, you know ?”

The young woman looked scared, then mistrustful.

“I don’t want to know anything, sir,” she said; “he left me to shift for myself, and he’s dead according to all accounts, and I’ll believe him dead till I know him living; and I am another man’s wife——”

“Excuse me,” interrupted Mr. Gervoise, “you are no man’s wife, unless your husband was dead at the time you married Mr. Grant.”

“And pray, sir, what is it all to you, and what do you come here prying into my business for?” asked Mrs. Grant, who seemed to have a warm temper.

“I came, Mrs. Grant, to pay you certain moneys which I owe to your husband, and if you will kindly give me proof of his death, I will do so this instant. I mean,” continued Mr. Gervoise, taking out his purse again, “genuine proof, not hearsay proof. A burial certificate for instance. Whether he died before or after your second marriage is nothing to me, Mrs. Grant.”

“I will have nothing to do with his debts,” bitterly said the young woman. “He married me, he forsook me. I have done without his money

whilst he was alive, and I will do without it now that he is dead."

"If he is dead," suggested Mr. Gervoise, pocketing his purse once more.

"He must be dead, and he is dead!" angrily said the young woman.

Her tone and her looks were both getting harsh and inhospitable. Mr. Gervoise took the hint, and thought it more prudent to go.

"I have the honour to wish you a good morning, madam," he said, in his grand way; and opening the door, he walked down stairs unaccompanied, and opened the street door for himself. As he closed it, he looked shrewdly at the bill in the window.

"A room to let," he thought; "there will soon be two rooms to let, or I am greatly mistaken."

Mr. Gervoise walked down to the end of Plough Lane, hailed an empty cab that was passing, and was driven to the old house in Great Ormond Street. This time it was Mrs. Scot who admitted him.

"Well, Mrs. Scot, and how are we to-day?" asked Mr. Gevoise.

"Poorly, sir."

"And low?"

"Oh! yes, sir, we are always low."

Mrs. Scot spoke briefly. She was evidently not

inclined for conversation, and Mr. Gervoise prudently avoided pressing her. Softly he went up the staircase, and very softly he entered Mr. Carnoosie's room. The old man sat bending over the fire, with his hands on his knees, in the same attitude as on the preceding evening; but when he looked up, Mr. Gervoise could see that Mr. Carnoosie's mood was no longer the same. He looked irritable and sharp.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Gervoise," he said, but no token of gladness appeared on his pale face.

"And I am glad to see you looking so well," replied Mr. Gervoise, taking a chair, and drawing near him.

"Well! I am looking well! Well with the grief that is in me!"

"Ah! true—very sad!"

"It is more than sad; but your boys are alive and well, you can't feel it."

"I have lost two wives," feelingly said Mr. Gervoise.

"And I would have lost ten rather than one of these boys; and they are both gone, both of them, and what was to be theirs must go to strangers."

"That is a melancholy reflection," remarked Mr. Gervoise; but he said no more.

"Well," said Mr. Carnoosie, after awhile.

"Well, I have this morning seen the future mistress of Carnoosie. A pretty little girl!"

"And who told you?—how do you know she will be the mistress of Carnoosie?"

"My dear sir, did you not say——"

"No, sir, I did not. I will have no girls in Carnoosie. I have told you so again and again, and it is about the boy I want to hear."

"I saw a sickly child; but the little girl is like her mother, and that mother is a very pretty young woman."

"But low," said Mr. Carnoosie, with a groan, "low. Poor Joseph degraded himself by that match; no man should ever marry beneath him."

"Very true. However, the remembrance of that marriage seems by no means pleasant to the young thing. By-the-bye, the letter you gave me must have been written some time."

"Yes, two or three years, I think. It was forgotten at my solicitor's."

"Just so. Now, don't be angry with the poor little thing—promise you will not, Mr. Carnoosie."

"Why so?"

"Why, because she is married again—that is all."

"Married again!—and to whom?"

"To an excellent young fellow, Thomas Grant,

a carpenter. There is a baby, too, and a fine baby."

Mr. Carnoosie raised two despairing hands.

"Poor Carnoosie!" he said, "is that your fate? But it shall not be—it cannot be! No, Joseph's child shall not bring such a family as that to Carnoosie."

"Mr. Mortimer will certainly do better," quietly said Mr. Gervoise.

"Mortimer!—the Radical!—the penny-a-liner, sir!—never, sir!"

The old man's pale face was flushed with anger. Mr. Gervoise, who was watching him curiously from behind his glasses, remained silent.

"I never liked Gordon," resumed Mr. Carnoosie, "and yet it must be Gordon. He is well off, a gentleman, no Radical. Yes, it must be Gordon. You say he has boys, Mr. Gervoise?"

"Three, I understand."

"I hope he may keep them," said the old man, with a deep, sad sigh.

"The worst is, that he is out of town," observed Mr. Gervoise.

"Who told you I wanted to see him?" irefully asked Mr. Carnoosie. "Do you think I want my heir to be hanging about me, fawning upon me, and wondering all the time how long the old man will last?"

"My dear sir," expostulated Mr. Gervoise, "human nature is not so perverse."

"I tell you, Mr. Gervoise, you are too simple, and I doubt if I have acted wisely in choosing you for a trustee. You do not know the world, sir; and above all, you do not know human nature. Why, I remember now, that letter in your hand has not been written more than a year, so that little widow was actually married again when she wrote to me for money. I tell you, sir, that Gordon, though in no need of Carnoosie, not being a poor man, always coveted it, and must covet it still in his heart; and I tell you that I should hate to see him, and know that he is longing for my death. I should hate, sir, to see him sitting in that chair as you are sitting now, and looking at me as you look at me, thinking all the time, 'Will the old wretch never die?'"

"I do not know much of Mr. Gordon," said Mr. Gervoise; "but I protest that I think him incapable——"

"Don't!" interrupted Mr. Carnoosie, with every token of impatience, "don't, or you will make me do the last thing I want to do—you will make me laugh!"

"Not for the world!" promptly said Mr. Gervoise; "not for the world!"

And indeed it would have been too dreary to

hear that sad old man burst out into ghastly merriment at Mr. Gervoise's simplicity.

"Ay! it must be Gordon after all—that cold, sly Gordon, whom I never liked. But Carnoosie must go to the old blood. My branch of the tree is blasted for ever—another, fresher and newer, may yet bear fruit."

It was Mr. Carnoosie who spoke. Poor old man! It was indeed a living death to sit in the old London house and speculate on the heirship of Carnoosie.

"Are you going?" he asked, seeing Mr. Gervoise look at his watch.

"Yes, I must leave you. I have an appointment in the City. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank you—I must think over all that."

He held out his thin cold hand to Mr. Gervoise, who gave it a tender pat and an affectionate shake, and left him. This time Mrs. Scot was not sitting in the outer room. Mr. Gervoise looked for her in the parlour, without success. There was no one below, save John, and with him Mr. Gervoise had no wish to speak.

"Mrs. Scot is keeping out of the way," thought Mr. Gervoise; "that looks bad."

It may be that Mrs. Scot was keeping out of the way. At all events she was upstairs sewing in a

very bare room on the second floor, and on hearing the street door shut she looked out of the window. It was Mr. Gervoise who was walking along the pavement; the coast was clear. Mrs. Scot closed the window, folded up her work, and went down to her master. He wanted her—he generally did want her when some one had just left him. Mistrust and weakness struggled in Mr. Carnoosie's mind. Weakness made him cling to strength wherever he found it, and mistrust made him fear his own subserviency. He thus frequently vacillated in his purposes, not so much because he could not keep his mind fixed on one object, as because he was conscious of being unduly influenced by whomsoever came near him. No sooner therefore was Mr. Gervoise gone and did Mrs. Scot appear, than fearful of having allowed Mr. Gervoise too much of his own way, Mr. Carnoosie said to his housekeeper,

“Mrs. Scot.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you know Plough Lane, Kensington?”

“No, sir.”

“But you could find it out.”

“I dare say I could.”

“Well, then, I want you to go there at once, please, and see a Mrs. Grant, a carpenter's wife—this is her direction. Take and keep that letter,

and read it if you like, Mrs. Scot, I have no secrets from you. Besides, I want you to find out Mrs. Grant. Do you know who she is ?”

“No sir.”

“She is Master Joseph’s widow. You remember Master Joseph ?”

“No, sir, I never saw him.”

“Ah ! to be sure. Well, she is his widow, as I said. Find her out, Mrs Scot, talk to her on some woman’s pretence, and tell me all about her, and her children, when you come back.”

“Am I to go now, sir ?”

“Yes, Mrs. Scot, do go now, if you please. I am sick and weary of it all.”

Without uttering a word of comment, Mrs. Scot left the room, went up to her own apartment on the second floor, put on a plain black bonnet and a plain black shawl, and at once left the house on her errand.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Scot liked a walk, so she walked from Great Ormond Street to Plough Lane. Once there, she had little difficulty in finding out Mrs. Grant's abode, and still less in finding out Mrs. Grant herself.

Mrs. Grant was in the scullery washing, and on being called by her landlady, she came out wiping on an old apron a pair of strong white arms covered with soapsuds. She gave Mrs. Scot an inquiring look, which Mrs. Scot answered by saying—

“Is your husband at home, ma'am?”

“No, ma'am, he is out at work.”

“Will he be in soon?”

“Not till evening, ma'am.”

Mrs. Scot looked disappointed, and supposed she must call again. Mrs. Grant suggested that if her husband was wanted for a job, he would call on the lady. But the lady did not accede to this pro-

posal; she was seldom within, she said, and still she wanted to see Mr. Grant. Now, as she spoke Mrs. Scot allowed her subtle black eyes to wander very searchingly over Mrs. Grant's face and person, and to rest with marked attention on the child, a boy, who had sat down on the last step of the staircase to watch the strange lady. The inexplicable yet unerring feminine instinct told Mrs. Grant that the woman who stood before her had come with no friendly purpose. At once she connected her visit with Mr. Gervoise's, and became alarmed and mistrustful. Her changing colour and frightened looks betrayed her. Mrs. Scot was conscious of the impression she produced, and she promptly sought to know why her presence made Mrs. Grant uneasy.

She shot a random arrow, and it went home.

"I believe Mr. Grant is your second husband, ma'am?" she said.

"No, ma'am, he is not," shortly replied Mrs. Grant.

"Then I am afraid you cannot be the person I was looking for," said Mrs. Scot.

"Perhaps not, ma'am."

"I was looking for a widow whose husband died in Australia, and, as I owed him a trifle——"

"It's not me, ma'am," interrupted Mrs. Grant, on whom this pretence, identical with that

which Mr. Gervoise had framed, produced a most unfavourable impression.

"But, perhaps, you could help me to find out that person," plausibly said Mrs. Scot.

"No, ma'am, I know no one about here. Perhaps Mrs. Smith can tell you," and Mrs. Grant, seeming to consider the matter settled, walked back to the scullery and to the washing-tub. Mrs. Scot could easily have taxed her with the letter in her pocket, but she saw no necessity for doing so; her mind was made up, and so was her report, and without even taking the trouble of questioning Mrs. Smith, who evidently could tell her nothing, or Mrs. Grant would not have referred to her, she opened the street-door and let herself out.

She had not walked ten steps from the house when she met a handsome young man with a bag of tools coming towards her.

"That must be the husband," thought Mrs. Scot, and she stopped short, resolved to question him.

"Are you Thomas Grant?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, I am," he briskly replied.

"All the doors at our house are out of repair—can you set them right?"

"I daresay I can, ma'am," he said smiling at the question.

Mrs. Scot tore a leaf out of her pocket-book, on

which her address was written, and gave it to him.

"Can you come to me next Thursday at eight o'clock?" she asked.

"No, ma'am; will not Friday do?"

"Well, perhaps it will. You have got children, have you not?"

"Only a baby, ma'am."

"Whose, then, is the little boy I saw at your house?"

"My wife's by her first husband."

"He's a pretty little fellow," said Mrs. Scot, as if to explain the question.

"He is, ma'am."

"And like you, too."

The young man laughed good-humouredly.

"Mind you don't forget Friday," said Mrs. Scot; and, giving him a nod, she walked away.

She had come by Bayswater, but she went away by Kensington. When she got to Campden Hill she stood still to think. There were but few houses then along that pretty lane, and the spot where Mrs. Scot stood was perfectly solitary. She was absorbed in thought, and did not feel a drizzling rain falling around her, till she was aware of a large umbrella being extended over her bonnet, whilst a courteous voice said,

"I beg you will accept of this, Mrs. Scot."

Mrs. Scot looked round. It was Mr. Gervoise who spoke, and it was Mr. Gervoise's silk umbrella which now protected her from the rain. They exchanged glances, searching, keen, and mistrustful; then Mr. Gervoise smiled and said,

"Shall we walk down the lane, Mrs. Scot?"

"I am robbing you of your umbrella, sir."

"Oh! not at all. Besides, you would not have me forsake a lady in distress, would you?"

Now, it so happened that, though Mrs. Scot would willingly have dispensed with Mr. Gervoise's escort, yet, as she had a new bonnet on, she could not, without being untrue to every feminine instinct, decline it, so they walked down the quiet lane side by side.

"I have a strong impression, madam," said Mr. Gervoise, "that we were both bent on the same errand. I wished to have another talk with poor Mrs. Grant, and I believe you have been with her."

"Yes, sir, I have," replied Mrs. Scot.

Concealment was useless, and might have been unadvisable.

"Well, Mrs. Scot," confidentially said Mr. Gervoise, "what do you think of that poor lady?"

"I don't think much about her, sir."

"Oh! ah! indeed!"

Mr. Gervoise looked as thoughtful as if Mrs.

Scot had uttered a profound reply, over which he felt bound to meditate. Then he resumed :

“Did you see her husband?”

“Which, sir?”

“Which!—the living one, to be sure.”

“Are you sure the first is dead, sir?” said Mrs. Scot, looking hard at him.

Mr. Gervoise looked amazed.

“Sure of it? Why, Mrs. Scot, Mrs. Grant has married again; surely that is proof.”

“I don’t think it is any proof.”

“Mrs. Scot?—I cannot have understood you rightly.”

But Mrs. Scot assured him that he had. Mr. Gervoise was a good man; he could not believe in the depravity Mrs. Scot suggested, so he took a charitable view of the subject, and hinted that if Mrs. Grant really had any doubts concerning her first husband’s death, she had never really and legally married the second.

“Let us think they were never married, Mrs. Scot; I like that better.”

Mrs. Scot did not answer. She rarely gave her opinion, even when asked for it, and of course never when it was not directly solicited.

“Well, I may be mistaken,” said Mr. Gervoise, after a pause; “but still, Mrs. Scot, is it not awful to think of that poor, uneducated Mrs.

Grant, and her husband, a common working man, lording it in Carnoosie?"

Still Mrs. Scot did not answer.

Mr. Gervoise sighed.

"Ah! Mrs. Scot," he said, "I am afraid of you—I am."

"Afraid, sir!—what for?"

"You are so—how shall I say it?—so impenetrable."

Mrs. Scot smiled grimly. She appreciated the praise.

"And yet it would be so easy," suggested Mr. Gervoise; "we have the same objects in view—we mean all for the best. I put it to you, Mrs. Scot, will these Grants do?"

"I know nothing about the Gordons, sir."

"Then you shall know everything about them, Mrs. Scot. Mr. Gordon is a delightful man, and he would appreciate and value you highly."

"New people don't like old faces, sir."

"Mrs. Scot, shall I pledge my word?"

"If Mr. Gordon will give me a written promise."

"My dear Mrs. Scot, suppose you were to drop it, and Mr. Carnoosie to find it. No—no, you must trust to me, or——"

Here Mr. Gervoise paused to take off his hat to a stylish-looking lady, whose carriage was slowly

driving up the lane, and who returned his courteous bow with a gracious smile. It was a trifle, but it decided a grave matter, and settled a debate in Mrs. Scot's mind. Mr. Gervoise held the umbrella over her bonnet with one hand, and with the other took off the hat from his handsome head to bow to the lady, thus linking her, the housekeeper of Carnoosie, with the tenant of the carriage. It was a trifle, but it was of a keeping with his whole bearing. Mr. Gervoise had fine manners, grand manners, which suited his stately person, and which he bestowed on all womankind. To men he was by no means so liberal, and he was certainly more courteous to Mrs. Scot than to her master. Now, hard and withered as was Mrs. Scot's heart, the word woman was not erased from it yet. She was not woman in gentleness, in feeling, in kindness, but she was woman in her sensitiveness to the neglects and slights that are woman's lot, when her fading beauty is not guarded by rank or by money. So she was grateful in her way to almost the only man from whom she had received a graceful act of courtesy for the last ten years.

"What was I saying?" said Mr. Gervoise, perceiving they had reached the end of the lane.

"You were talking of Mr. Gordon, sir," replied Mrs. Scot, turning back.

"Ay! to be sure, of Mr. Gordon. Well, his

wife is a mere baby, and will require your guidance, Mrs. Scot. Indeed, this is a point about which I need not argue. Carnoosie cannot do without you, you know."

Mrs. Scot seemed to meditate. Then suddenly raising her subtle black eyes to Mr. Gervoise, she said, briefly :

"I should like to see those Gordons."

"Very natural, but they are travelling."

Mrs. Scot walked on a few steps, then put a concise but comprehensive question.

"What are they like?"

"The Gordons?—oh! to be sure! Well, Mr. Gordon is tall, and fair, and pale; a man of forty or so—very amiable. Mrs. Gordon very amiable, too; a little dark woman—very languid. The three boys are fine, high-spirited lads; and that is really all I know about them, Mrs. Scot."

Mrs. Scot seemed to think that was not much, but she merely said :

"Mr. Carnoosie shall decide, sir."

"Just so, but you can help him to see his way. He thinks highly of you, Mrs. Scot."

Mrs. Scot knew nothing about that, but she allowed Mr. Gervoise to lead her up and down the lane, and talk to her in his grand, courteous, persuasive way; and matters were progressing very much to Mr. Gervoise's satisfaction, when Gilbert

and Beatrice turned a corner of the lane, and came running hand-in-hand towards them. Now, Mrs. Scot merely knew that Mr. Gervoise had chambers in Gray's Inn; of his Kensington abode she had no suspicion; she thought the chambers sufficient to his wants, and was far from imagining that he could feel lonely in them, and require the society of Mrs. Gordon and Beatrice. With some surprise she saw that these children knew him, and with a look of mingled inquiry and mistrust, she gazed down in Beatrice's little dark face.

"Good morning, little ones," airily said Mr. Gervoise. "Take care of the child, Gilbert," and, waving his hand to them, he walked on.

"I have seen that face before," said Mrs. Scot, looking after Beatrice, who was looking after her. "I have seen it in Carnoosie."

"No, my dear madam, you have not; that child was born in Spain, and has not been three months in England."

"I did not say I had seen the child, I said I had seen her face."

Mr. Gervoise raised his eyebrows, and smiled; but though Mrs. Scot looked hard at him, she could detect nothing like embarrassment or confusion, or guilt of any kind, in his handsome face.

So they resumed their conversation, and walked up and down the lane, till, coming once more to

the end, Mrs. Scot hailed an omnibus, and parted from Mr. Gervoise.

She soon reached Great Ormond Street. At the street door of her master's house she met his lawyer coming out, and she guessed what his errand had been. Up-stairs she found Mr. Carnoosie leaning back in his chair, and looking very pale and exhausted. So he had been making his will in her absence ; he had sent her on a fool's errand after all. With more contempt than displeasure Mrs. Scot watched that feeble face, and with a scornful smile she thought how she was going to undo all Mr. Carnoosie's secret work. But though she came forward, she let him speak first.

"Well, Mrs. Scot?" he said, inquiringly.

"Well, sir, I saw Mrs. Grant."

"And the boy?"

"I saw a boy."

"Which, Mrs. Scot? You know she is married again."

"I don't know about that, sir ; according to her account she never had but one husband, the living one."

"Why, surely—surely she was Joseph's wife!" cried Mr. Carnoosie.

"Well, sir, I do not say she was not ; but I saw a little boy, who is very like Mr. Grant—blue eyes, fair hair—his very image."

Perplexity and dismay appeared on Mr. Carnoosie's countenance, and he asked :

"Did you see that Mr. Grant, then?"

"Yes, sir, I met him. He is to come next Friday and settle the doors."

"And is the child his child, Mrs. Scot?"

"He says not, sir."

Mr. Carnoosie long remained silent. That Mrs. Grant's child might not be his dead cousin's, had never occurred to him before. Now he felt grievous doubts on the subject. What if Mrs. Scot's evident suspicion were founded on truth! What if he had been running the fearful risk of bestowing his ancestral Carnoosie on Thomas Grant the carpenter's child! Oh! what a mockery on the plans of a lifetime! Mrs. Scot watched him, wondering how it would end. At length Mr. Carnoosie sighed deeply, and raised his head, which had been sunk on his breast.

"Mrs. Scot," he said, handing her his keys, "open the second drawer of that bureau, if you please, and take out a sheet of foolscap tied with red tape."

Mrs. Scot obeyed slowly and methodically; when Mr. Carnoosie held the paper he had asked for, he quietly thrust it into the fire, and said drearily,

"There, you have lost Carnoosie, my little one."

"Just so," thought Mrs. Scot; "and if your mother had kept a civil tongue in her head, it might have done her some good." And not without satisfaction, Mrs. Scot remembered the pretty face and the white arms glistening with soap-suds; and as she saw the paper burning, she felt that she had her revenge. But Mr. Carnoosie looked and felt sorely troubled. He had, after much hesitation and doubt, made his will, and the ink with which it was written was scarcely dry, when he destroyed it. And now he must leave his property to that Gordon after all, and it was all to begin over again. Mrs. Scot watched him with a cool, sarcastic glance, and again waited till he spoke.

"Mrs. Scot," he said at length.

"Yes, sir."

"I think I shall send for Mr. Gervoise."

"Very well, sir."

"I think he is a good man, Mrs. Scot." He gave her an appealing look, which said: "Let me have that comfort, Mrs. Scot. Let me cling to that, if you please."

Now Mrs. Scot no doubt thought Mr. Gervoise a good man, but no doubt she also thought two good men better than one, for her slow reply was:

"He is, sir; and so is Mr. Raby."

"Mr. Raby! what Mr. Raby?"

"The one that you were trustee for, sir."

Mr. Carnoosie did not answer, but looked deeply perplexed. He knew Mrs. Scot's meaning, and the vista it opened was bewildering. What should he do? On what should he decide? His head ached, he felt miserable and distressed. It was very dreadful all this toil of thought. Ah! if his boys, if those two fine, noble boys of his had been living!

"And how are *we* this afternoon?" asked a pleasant voice. "How are we?"

Mrs. Scot started and looked round from her master's chair. It was Mr. Gervoise, bland, handsome, and smiling. Had he overheard anything? Nothing in his pleasant face betrayed that he had. Mrs. Scot softly withdrew, whilst Mr. Carnoosie said, with some eagerness:

"I am glad to see you—I wanted you—sit down—give me pen and ink, I am going to have done with it."

"Very right—very right!" said Mr. Gervoise, looking hard at a piece of half-burned foolscap in the fender. "Get rid of it by all means."

"I have given up the boy in Plough Lane."

"Excuse me," interrupted Mr. Gervoise, "I feel a strong draught."

He rose and closed the door, and the draught being still too strong, he drew and unfolded a tall

japped screen around Mr. Carnoosie's chair and his own.

"Now," he said, briskly, "I think we are all right."

"I have given up the boy in Plough Lane," said Mr. Carnoosie. "But I must see Gordon."

"He is on the Continent, I believe."

"With his boys?"

"With his boys."

"And suppose they are drowned or killed?"

"I would advise you to provide against the contingency."

"And suppose you die suddenly?"

"What am I to say, my dear sir?"

"I do not want you to say anything, Mr. Gervoise; I only mean to warn you that I mean to have a second trustee."

Mr. Gervoise looked thoughtful; perhaps the vision of a sudden death held forth to him was not pleasant; he said at length,

"Very wise, my dear sir, very; of course another trustee in the event of my sudden decease is the very thing."

"No, that is not my meaning. We will have another trustee during your lifetime, and so if one dies the other remains."

"Extremely judicious," calmly said Mr. Gervoise; "but may I ask with whom I am to act—I

need not tell you it may make a difference to me."

"You would not draw back, Gervoise, would you?—you would not draw back?"

"My dear sir, I told you from the first—"

"Yes, but you will not draw back," implored Mr. Carnoosie. "It is only an old friend of mine, Mr. Raby; you have heard me speak of Mr. Raby?"

Mr. Gervoise looked thoughtful. No, he could not say he remembered.

"I was one of his trustees," continued Mr. Carnoosie; "for he was an orphan; and a world of trouble I had, so he cannot say me nay."

Mr. Gervoise still looked very thoughtful. "I must think over this, Mr. Carnoosie," he said; "it is a very serious matter. Your heir may die before he comes into possession; then there will be minors of course, and a long and serious responsibility to be shared with this Mr. Raby. I assure you I must think over it."

Mr. Carnoosie looked irritable and distressed.

"It is enough to make one die," he said, peevishly, "to hear so much about one's death beforehand. Coming into possession, minors and trustees, I am sick of the whole of it, Mr. Gervoise, and I don't know why I make a will at all. I do believe it was you first put it into my head."

"Then, my dear sir, allow me, as a matter of delicacy, to withdraw altogether. You can have

Mr. Raby, and you can easily find some other friend; in short," said Mr. Gervoise, rising, "we shall both be better pleased. Not a word—I am not offended; not at all."

Mr. Carnoosie rose too, and, clinging to his chair for support, he said eagerly, "You won't desert me—you can't desert me, Mr. Gervoise. I am not sure of Mr. Raby. I do not even know where he is. Let that rest, Mr. Gervoise; let that rest."

"Let it rest," kindly said Mr. Gervoise; "and now," he added, dipping a pen in ink, and drawing a sheet of paper towards him, "shall I just put down a few of the items for you. 'To Richard Gordon, or, if the said Richard Gordon should die before coming into possession, to his issue,' is not that it?"

"Yes, I hate the man; but he is of the old stock, after all. Well, what are you in a brown study for?"

"I am thinking of the extraordinary shrewdness and perspicuity you display, my dear sir, in thus disposing of the estate; but will you allow me to suggest something to you?"

Mr. Carnoosie nodded.

"You have provided for the event of Mr. Gordon's death—would it not be wise and proper to allow his widow, if he should leave one, a jointure?"

"I shall see about that."

"Allow me also to put a question concerning my share in this matter. My trust is at an end if Mr. Gordon survives you; but suppose he does not, am I to be trustee for his children—and suppose they die, am I to be trustee for their children—and supposing they die—"

"I'll have no more of that," passionately interrupted Mr. Carnoosie. "Do you want to make a churchyard of the room, that you go on so?"

"My dear sir, it is business—only business."

"Take that paper with you to a lawyer, and get it drawn up, and bring it to me to sign, and let me hear no more of it," said Mr. Carnoosie plaintively. "All I want is to have it over."

"So do I, for your sake."

"I wish it were all over," continued Mr. Carnoosie, "and, Mr. Gervoise, I should like to see Mr. Gordon after all. Do you think we could manage it."

Mr. Gervoise hesitated.

"Why, yes, with time," he said at length.

"You are sure?"

Mr. Gervoise looked at him and smiled.

Yes, he was quite sure.

"Well, then, leave me, please; come round with the lawyer to-morrow morning."

He looked so feeble and exhausted that Mr.

Gervoise would have liked to come round with the lawyer this same evening, and part of his fears he communicated to Mrs. Scot when he found her in the outer room. She did not share his apprehensions, though she promised to sit up with her master that night. Mr. Gervoise also thought it more prudent to spend the night in his chambers, and not return to Kensington.

Early the next morning he came round with a lawyer. Mr. Carnoosie though weak was collected, and equal to the task of dictating his will. Mr. Gervoise scrupulously abstained from interfering, and read the paper whilst the business went on. When it was over, however, he consented to take charge of the document.

"And long may it be before I surrender it," he said with a benevolent smile; "long may it be!"

"You'll let me have a copy of it," feebly said Mr. Carnoosie.

"By all means, my dear sir, by all means. Are you going home soon?"

"To-day."

"I shall see you off," said Mr. Gervoise, patting his hand. "I shall see you off."

CHAPTER VII.

THE old house in Great Ormond Street was shut up, and for some reason or other Mr. and Mrs. Grant had left Plough Lane ; but Rosemary Cottage was gay, and prosperous, and happy ; Mr. Gervoise was grand and courteous, Mrs. Gordon was very lively, and Gilbert and Beatrice were inseparable.

There stood in the back parlour of Rosemary Cottage a vast and deep arm-chair in which they delighted, for the excellent reason that it held them both. Gilbert got in first, then Beatrice climbed up, and if the chair was not wide enough, why could she not sit or trample upon Gilbert ?

Some love passages were enacted in that chair, and some battles too. Indeed, the battles generally came first, and the love passages followed. In both Beatrice was chief actor. She was impetuous, but she was also fond ; and if, Pallas-like, she had pulled the fair and flowing locks of her young

Achilles rather too energetically, she was prompt to make amends with an embrace and a kiss, which was more than Minerva did. Mrs. Gordon sometimes wondered that Mr. Gervoise kept his elder son at home to romp and play with Beatrice, but that gentleman replying that his great object was to make Gilbert learn English, and that he could not do so more pleasantly and more easily than by enjoying her daughter's society, Mrs. Gordon was satisfied, and in her anxiety to please her boarder, forbore to send Beatrice to school. Thus the arm-chair in the back parlour was rarely empty, for the weather was wet, and out-door exercise objectionable.

Mr. Gervoise remained a good deal at home, and he bestowed a considerable share of his society on Mrs. Gordon in the front parlour. She became accustomed to it, and when he happened to leave her she missed him very much. She missed him exceedingly one dull and dreary afternoon. He had been gone since the morning, and the day wore on, and still he was not coming back. Such a day, too, as it was! Sleet turning into snow! What kept him out so long!—business; but what business? Was he rich? she wondered. From that thought she went to another, until she came back to the first: what kept him out so long?

In the meanwhile, Gilbert and Beatrice were deep

in the arm-chair and deep in conversation, half real and half dreamy, according to the way of children. They had had a terrible game of romping, and felt tired. At least Gilbert leaned back in the chair, shut his eyes, let his arms hang loosely, stretched his legs, and professed himself exhausted.

"Are you?" asked Beatrice with concern.

"Oh! very—I am quite faint."

Through his half-shut eyes he saw her bending over him; she too was in the chair, and when she was close to him he suddenly seized her, and, with a shout of triumph, attempted to kiss her. Now Beatrice had a very feminine instinct; she would kiss Gilbert, but would never let Gilbert kiss her if she could help it. This was well known to Mr Gervoise's son, and albeit, not more affectionate than boys are, he took infinite pleasure in rousing Beatrice's indignation and shrill screams on that score. The contest generally ended with the magnanimous declaration on his part, "Now, Beatrice, do not be silly, as if I wanted to kiss you!" And indeed satisfied with having had the pleasure of teasing her, Gilbert generally released his enemy when he was on the brink of victory. The present instance proved no exception to the rule. Gilbert seeing that tears of vexation stood in Beatrice's dark eyes, suddenly let her go, and said good-humouredly,

"Oh, you ninny! don't you know that I never

do it. Why, it is never I who kiss you, Beatrice—it is always you who kiss me.”

Beatrice checked her tears and laughed, nestled close to Gilbert with perfect confidence, and whispered in his ear,

“Tell me a story.”

“I have not one left.”

“Do, Gilbert; there’s a dear.”

But Gilbert was obdurate. Then Beatrice asked him to tell her about Verville and its Château, which was also his birth-place. This request Gilbert complied with, to the best of his power.

“I should like to see it,” dreamily said Beatrice; “but I am afraid to cross the sea.”

“You little goose, I shall put you on my back and carry you over!”

This suggestion tickled them both amazingly; for it proved that Gilbert’s legs must be very long, also that Beatrice must be careful of her skirts, and many other entertaining fancies of the kind, each of which provoked long bursts of laughter.

“Has it four fountains?” suddenly asked Beatrice.

“Four fountains! no, why should it?”

Beatrice did not answer. A red-brick mansion rose before her; majestic trees and four fountains with waters bright and sparkling as liquid diamonds, completed the picture. She seemed rapt in her dream, and Gilbert looked at her with some won-

der. Young as he was, he often felt that Beatrice was not a child like any other child. Her language, her fancies, and her looks were often beyond her years. Just now, with her dark rapt eyes and her red lips parted, she had an elfish aspect, which puzzled his companion.

"Well," he said, pinching her, "what are you thinking about?"

Beatrice turned slowly round and looked at him earnestly; then she laid her cheek to his, and whispered softly,

"I like *you*, Gilbert, but I don't like——"

"Hold your tongue," interrupted Gilbert, turning crimson, "how dare you say it!"

For he knew to whom Beatrice's declaration of dislike referred. His blue eyes and his kind face both wore a meaning of such severity that Beatrice was abashed.

"Why *will* you say those things?" asked Gilbert, softening down to a tone of mild remonstrance.

"He's in the next room," she whispered.

"My father—nonsense!"

But Beatrice's hearing was keen, and she again declared that Mr. Gervoise was in the next room. Gilbert would not believe her; an argument followed, and, to put an end to it, Gilbert rose and abruptly opened the door which separated the two parlours. Beatrice was right; Mr. Gervoise was there

and, what was more, it was evident from his attitude that father and son had been engaged pretty much in the same fashion, with the difference which lies between fourteen and forty, and between jest and earnest ; for Mrs. Gordon was leaning back on the sofa with a blush on her cheek ; and Mr. Gervoise was kissing her fair hand with a look of very tender devotion.

He quickly turned round on hearing the door open ; and seeing Gilbert, who stared amazed on the threshold of the room, and behind him Beatrice, who stared with all the might of her black eyes, he rose, and without relinquishing Mrs. Gordon's hand, said sweetly,

“My love.”

Beatrice came forward, and looked at them with a dim foreshadowing of the truth—not in its actual reality indeed, but in its terror.

“Come, my dear Beatrice,” said her guardian, beckoning the child to approach ; “your affectionate mother has something to tell you.”

“I cannot, I cannot, Mr. Gervoise !” hysterically cried Mrs. Gordon ; “do not ask me to do it !”

“No, my love—I shall do it for you. Gilbert—Beatrice,” said Mr. Gervoise, standing in the middle of the parlour, and expanding both his hands as he looked at the astonished children, “you have each

got a new parent. In a few days Mrs. Gordon will become Mrs. Gervoise."

Despair, rage, and grief filled Beatrice's poor little heart as she heard him. She looked at him, then at her mother, who was leaning back on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands; then at Gilbert, who stood mute and astonished. She vaguely felt his love was the only love left to her now, and to him she flew, throwing her arms around him, clinging to him, and sobbing passionately.

"My dear," said Mr. Gervoise, "I think you had better remove the child. Gilbert, take her into the next room."

Beatrice, still sobbing piteously, allowed Gilbert to lead her to the back parlour. Mrs. Gordon followed them out.

"Beatrice, what ails you?" asked the poor lady, trying to be severe, and speaking with involuntary fondness.

Beatrice's sobs were only broken by a few passionate words—

"Poor—dear—poor papa!"

Mrs. Gordon, who was bending over her, drew back as if she had been struck. Injudiciously, though most sincerely, had she often told Beatrice that she would never marry again. Never would she replace that dear lost angel. Not a month ago she had told her so, and now she had promised to

become another man's wife ! Instead of reproving Beatrice, she began to cry ; whilst the child, still hiding her head against Gilbert's breast, sobbed passionately.

Poor little Beatrice ! this is your second great sorrow. The first came on that evening, more than a year ago, when the father, whom you kissed as he slept, left you for six feet of earth in Kensal Green, and never wakened to smile on his child again. The second great grief is on you now. The mother whom you have loved with such fond, though childish affection, has put you by for that hated Frenchman. You nursed her up in her little selfishness, you were her little housemaid, Beatrice; you slaved like a woman, whilst she cried like a child on the sofa ; but it is in the destiny of love that some must ever give and rarely get ; that some receive much and return little, and thus early that destiny is yours. A few flattering words, the pressure of a hand, three or four looks of those fine blue eyes, the subtle hope of living in idleness, with nothing to do, with servants to wait upon her, with fine clothes to wear—these were mightier in your mother's frail heart than your childish devotion. And it is this you feel, though you know it not, and are too ignorant to analyse your feelings. It is this makes you cry out, " Poor papa ! dear papa !" Happy are the dead ! Their sins

are forgotten or atoned for. Their love and their virtues alone are remembered. They stand safe and smiling on the shores of the other world, beyond the reach of the heart's reproach or blame in this.

But though bitter was Beatrice's grief, she heard her mother weeping. She could not resist that appeal for mercy; she left Gilbert, and turned round to Mrs. Gordon. She clasped her little arms around her mother's neck, and kissed her eagerly. Mrs. Gordon sighed, dried her tears, wiped away Beatrice's, asked if she were good, kissed her again, and finding that she was in a strong fever, gently coaxed her upstairs.

Beatrice made no resistance. Her mother undressed her, put her in her little cot as if she were a baby once more, and sat with her hand in hers. With the perverse and jealous instinct of childhood, Beatrice long remained awake; at length, conquered by fatigue and the violence of her own emotion, she fell asleep. When she awoke it was night, a candle was burning on the table, Mrs. Gordon was gone, and Gilbert was looking at her from the door. Seeing her awake, he came in. Beatrice opened and stretched out her arms to him, and as he came forward and bent over her; she clasped him passionately, and again began to weep and sob. He kissed her, unproved this time,

and administered comfort after his own fashion.

"Why do you fret?" he asked. "We shall be like brother and sister now, and I shall never go away—you were always afraid that I should go away—why are you not glad, then?"

Beatrice could not be glad. Nevertheless his words comforted her. She smiled through her tears, for she loved Gilbert very much, and it was very pleasant to think of being always with him. He said many other kind things which soothed her little vexed heart, and finally he sat down by her and told her a story. Beatrice interrupted him to say :

"You will never go, will you?"

"Never, of course."

"But if I fall asleep you will go."

Gilbert smiled, and said he would not.

"Well, then, give me your hand."

Gilbert gave his hand to the capricious child, and went on with his tale. Long before he reached the end, Beatrice's deep and regular breathing betrayed that she had fallen asleep once more. But, though Beatrice's little fingers held him but loosely, Gilbert did not do as Mrs. Gordon had done. He stayed by her patiently and faithfully, not merely because he was fond of Beatrice, but because he would not have deceived her even in her sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Mrs. Gordon came down from Beatrice, she found Mr. Gervoise looking austere, to use the very mildest word.

"Behold, my love, the result of your injudicious indulgence!" he said, rather severely.

Mrs. Gordon gave Mr. Gervoise a surprised look. It seemed odd to be already censured.

"Mrs. Gordon," said the happy lover, "allow me to ask why the child is in such a way?"

Mrs. Gordon looked embarrassed.

"Why, you know," she replied, "Beatrice is an only child, and perhaps it might have been better to wait and prepare her."

Mr. Gervoise looked amazed.

"Wait!—what for?" he asked.

Mrs. Gordon stared at her future husband, who returned the look with great tranquillity; upon which the lady took out her pocket-handkerchief and burst into tears.

"Mrs. Gordon, may I ask to know the meaning of this?"

Before Mrs. Gordon could answer the question, which Mr. Gervoise put in a tone of all but conjugal authority, the parlour door opened softly, and a lady, tall, pale, and faded, and attired in a heavy black cloak, covered with snow, stood before the astonished pair.

"I found the street door ajar," she said, hesitatingly, "and so I came in, for it is snowing very fast."

She spoke in a thick and indistinct voice—by no means a pleasing voice. Her appearance was common-place, her attire shabby, poor, and rather untidy. Yet she was a lady, you saw it at a glance. She was, as we said, tall, faded, and pale, and if she had been pretty, it was a long time ago. Beauty was for ever erased from that face, on which sorrow and many cares had left their lines, but which even they could not redeem from the reproach of common-place.

"It is such a night!" she said, shaking the snow off her cloak on the carpet. "I really must have had a wish to come and see you to venture out."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you," stammered Mrs. Gordon.

She had a vague remembrance of having seen

this lady before, but when or where she did not know.

"Well, I think you ought to be," said the lady, taking a chair, and sitting down by the blazing fire, to dry her damp clothes. She spoke a little crossly; perhaps she thought her welcome cool. "Anna would scarcely let me stir, but I said it would be too bad not to come, and so I came."

"Anna!" thought Mrs. Gordon, trying to remember.

"Oh! dear, what a weary world it is!" sighed the stranger, half shutting her eyes, and leaning back in her chair, "it has half killed me to come here from Hampstead."

It was plain this lady thought a great deal of her trouble, and wished to make much of it. But who was she? Mrs. Gordon gave Mr. Gervoise an appealing look.

That gentleman had stood perfectly still and somewhat in the background since the stranger had entered the room, and neither Mrs. Gordon nor the lady had minded him. But Beatrice's mother was startled to see with how fixed and how full a glance of his fine blue eyes Mr. Gervoise regarded this intruder. Suddenly the look changed, a smile passed across his features, and Mrs. Gordon saw him advance towards the stranger with a bland countenance and a courteous bearing.

"He knows her!" she thought with rapid jealousy.

It was plain Mr. Gervoise did know the lady, and as plain too that the lady knew him. She sat up straight in her chair, staring at him with open mouth and eyes, evidently as much amazed to meet him then and there, as Mrs. Gordon had been to see her at all.

"I believe we have met before, madam," said Mr. Gervoise.

The stranger replied she believed so.

"In one of the Midland Counties, I believe?"

"Yes, it was in one of the Midland Counties."

"My love, you must introduce me," said Mr. Gervoise, turning to Mrs. Gordon. "I have had the pleasure of meeting this lady before, but you must introduce me, my love."

On hearing this endearing epithet the stranger looked bewildered.

"Am I to understand—?" she said, looking from Mr. Gervoise to Mrs. Gordon.

"Just so," he blandly replied. "I am now step-father as well as guardian to our dear Beatrice Gordon."

Blank dismay appeared in the stranger's pale face. It was plain that this marriage was a blow to her.

Unable to bear this any longer, Mrs Gordon

turned to Mr Gervoise, and said in her sharpest tones—

“Mr. Gervoise, will you explain?”

“My dear, will you introduce me?”

“I think, Mr. Gervoise, you are much better acquainted with this lady than I am.”

“Surely, Louisa, you know me!” cried the stranger; “surely you know Ellinor Jameson.”

“No,” stammered Mrs. Gordon, staring at her, and seeking in vain for some trace of the blooming past in that faded face.

Miss Jameson, who had half risen, sighed and sat down again in her chair—sad and subdued.

“I know I am altered,” she said, “and my voice is gone since I had that dreadful sore throat; but Anna said she was sure you would know me.”

So this was Ellinor Jameson, the belle of the school. There had been some rivalry and no great liking between them, and Mrs. Gordon could not imagine what brought her from Hampstead to Kensington, on this inclement evening.

“How did you find me out?” she asked.

“Oh! I had such a hunt for you! I came from the country.”

Before Mrs. Gordon could put in a word, and she meant to put in a good many, for the purpose of ascertaining why Miss Jameson had been hunting for her, Mr. Gervoise interfered.

“Have you left Mrs. Herring’s, Miss Jameson?” he asked.

“I have indeed, and it was on leaving——”

“What an unpleasant life you must have had there! Miss Jameson,” compassionately said Mr. Gervoise, sitting down by the lady’s side, and suddenly growing confidential.

Readers! do you feel at a loss for conversation? and do you wish to make the other person take the full burden of the talking? Broach the subject of that person’s troubles! This infallible rule proved good with Miss Jameson, as well as with most of us.

“A governess never has a very pleasant life,” she said with some bitterness, “but Mrs. Herring was too hard to please. She had such a temper, that really I thought sometimes I must go crazy! If it were not for dear Anna I could not have borne it so long.”

“A sister, I presume,” said Mr. Gervoise.

“My elder by ten years, and an invalid too. She was quite a mother to me when I was a girl, and of course I now bear with a good deal for her sake. However, some one told her how matters stood, so she wrote to me to give up Mrs. Herring at once. I did, and came up to town.”

“But Mrs. Herring was liberal at least,” said Mr. Gervoise.

"I earned thirty pounds a year with her."

"Thirty pounds a year for a lady of your accomplishments!" cried Mr. Gervoise, indignant and amazed. "Why, Miss Jameson, I should hold you cheap at eighty pounds a year. Ah, my love," he added, turning to Mrs. Gordon, "if we could secure Miss Jameson for our darling Beatrice, what a blessing it would be!"

If Miss Jameson had not been so faded and so old-looking, Mrs. Gordon's dawning jealousy would have run wild at such a speech from her future husband. Even as it was, she thought him crazy to talk in that way to a worn-out governess of whom he knew nothing; and securing her for Beatrice was more than absurd—it was cruel to poor Ellinor, who might be so insane as to believe him. Anxious to cut short all such absurdity, and also to know why Miss Jameson, who had not come near her for so many years, had now sought and found her out, Mrs. Gordon said rather pointedly, "Ellinor, what is it you have to tell me? For I am sure you have something to tell me."

"My dear!" reprovingly said Mr. Gervoise.

"I tell you, Mr. Gervoise, I know Ellinor has something to tell me—I see it in her face."

"Do you—let me see it too then."

And Mr. Gervoise, whose chair was already very close to Miss Jameson's, drew it still closer, and

looked hard in her face. In her very eyes he looked, and as these were still fine eyes, Mrs. Gordon's colour rose. As to that, so did Miss Jameson's. Her lids fell too; she looked at the fire, and seemed thoroughly confused.

"I had nothing particular to say," she said at length.

"Nothing?" incredulously echoed Mrs. Gordon.

Miss Jameson looked deeply perplexed. She glanced hesitatingly at Mr. Gervoise; he was telling off some imaginary account on his fingers.

"Did I say eighty pounds a year, Miss Jameson?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, I think you did."

"I repeat it again, you are cheap at eighty pounds."

"I know I never got what I ought to have got," said Miss Jameson.

"No, you have been shamefully imposed upon; and indeed allow me to request you neither to advertise nor to answer any advertisement without consulting me."

Miss Jameson coloured with pleasure and excitement, and murmured her thanks.

"How long have you left the country, ma'am?" asked Mr. Gervoise.

"A fortnight."

"And I believe it is about three months since we met there, is it not?"

He looked at Miss Jameson, who seemed deeply perplexed.

"Yes, it must be three months," musingly continued Mr. Gervoise.

"I—I suppose so," she replied in answer to his inquiring look, but she seemed ill at ease.

"My dear, are we going to have some dinner?" asked Mr. Gervoise.

Mrs. Gordon trembled with passion. He wanted her to leave the room, and to remain alone with Miss Jameson, but that should not be—no, that it should not. So she merely rang the bell, and when the servant answered it, she gave her orders to the cook at the parlour-door. Now, not a word was spoken whilst her back was turned, but something passed nevertheless, for when she came back she found Miss Jameson looking pale and frightened, and Mr. Gervoise flushed and smiling.

"I suppose, ma'am," he said, "Mrs. Herring told you I had important business down in the country. I have an English son, you know, and he has lately come into some property in the neighbourhood."

Miss Jameson's lips parted to say something; but she changed her mind and was silent.

"I hope we shall soon have dinner, my love," said Mr. Gervoise, who looked very brisk and

cheerful. "Miss Jameson looks perished with the cold."

"I think I had better go," said Miss Jameson, "Anna will be anxious."

"Why should she? She knows you are here."

It was again Mr. Gervoise who spoke.

Mrs. Gordon sat cold as marble, and neither looked at nor addressed her visitor.

Nevertheless, Miss Jameson seemed unable to make up her mind to depart—everything about her betokened confusion and perplexity. She had come in calm and decided, but some spell had fallen over her, and she was now the picture of mental uneasiness.

"No, I think I had better go," she said again.

"Do you really?" replied Mr. Gervoise, rising; "well then, I shall see you to the omnibus. Kensington is a wild place, ma'am."

Miss Jameson did not decline his escort, but, fastening again her loosened cloak, she went up to Mrs. Gordon, and bade her a hesitating good night. Mrs. Gordon drew herself up, cold, offended, and jealous, and said, "Good night, Miss Jameson;" but she did not add "come again," and, what Miss Jameson felt still more keenly, she never asked after "dear Anna," that poor, delicate elder sister, for whom Miss Jameson had been toiling all these years.

A white covering of snow, as yet unsoiled by the feet of passengers, lay on the ground, as Mr. Gervoise and Miss Jameson left the house. The way from Rosemary Cottage to the Kensington Road was down a quiet lane with green hedges and gardens on either side. It was quiet in the daytime, and on this evening it was utterly solitary. Mr. Gervoise saw that he could speak safely, and he did so.

"My dear madam," he began, "let me first assure you that I have no wish to pry into any secret. Whatever may be your object in calling, I do not wish to know it. Whatever may have passed long ago, it is no business of mine."

"Indeed, Mr. Gervoise," rather earnestly said Miss Jameson, "you are mistaken, I had no secret to tell—it is anything but a secret."

"Still, I would rather not know it," persisted Mr. Gervoise; "and indeed I think it would be better to let Mrs. Gordon's—Mrs. Gervoise's mind, I mean, remain quiet. I did admire your discretion and reserve this evening; I can see you are a prudent person, Miss Jameson. Poor Mrs. Gervoise is in a most delicate state of health—she must not be excited on any account, either now or at a future time—you understand?"

Miss Jameson said she did, and she added,

"Then you are married?"

"Privately," replied Mr. Gervoise; "we are privately married. With regard to yourself, my dear Miss Jameson, allow me to consider you engaged for my dear Beatrice?"

"Are you in earnest, Mr. Gervoise?"

"Quite in earnest."

"But I cannot believe in it!" cried poor Miss Jameson, stopping short. "Oh! I have been so unhappy with those Herrings, and all for thirty pounds a year!"

"I am sure of it; and I repeat it, I am in earnest; and there is a difference between thirty pounds and eighty pounds a year."

"God bless you!" gasped Miss Jameson, and she fairly burst into tears.

She had fasted nearly the whole of that day—she was faint and weary and broken in spirits, and the touch of prosperity was too much for her. Alas! that magic wand cannot always heal the ills that have preceded its long-deferred advent.

"Mrs. Gervoise will not consent," she said after awhile, recovering both her self-possession and her sad experience of life; "I came in a friendly spirit, the bearer as I thought——"

"Just so," interrupted Mr. Gervoise, who did not want to hear Miss Jameson's errand, even in the solitude of the lane; "just so—but you must excuse Mrs. Gervoise. How often she has men-

tioned you affectionately to me—it was quite touching !”

“Her welcome was very cool,” persisted Miss Jameson ; “she did not know me—she never inquired after poor Anna—she did not tell me to call again.”

“My dear madam,” confidentially said Mr. Gervoise, pressing Miss Jameson’s arm against his own, “Mrs. Gervoise is a blessing I do not hope to enjoy long. Her health is gone, her mind is even affected. My dear Miss Jameson, I speak as if you were an old friend. You may believe me—I have the highest medical authority for it—she has an internal complaint—and I married her for the sake of her daughter.”

Miss Jameson gave a little start ; Mr. Gervoise stopped short, astonished at what he had said ; but though a cautious man, he was subject to these unpleasant bursts of frankness. But it was too late to recall the words ; besides an omnibus was passing at the end of the lane, Mr. Gervoise hailed it, saw Miss Jameson in, and watched the vehicle bearing her away.

“She will just do,” he thought, as he turned back to Rosemary Cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. GERVOISE found Mrs. Gordon waiting for him in silent dignity on the sofa.

"My dearest love," he said, sinking down in the chair Miss Jameson had left vacant, "is not dinner late to day?"

Now "my dearest love" surely stands high in the language of lover tenderness. It is a superlative applied to a gentle name, and giving it both strength and meaning; but Mrs. Gordon heard the tender inquiry with ill-concealed resentment. She knew that Mr. Gervoise liked his meals to be punctual, and she felt that "dearest love," was entirely subordinate to "is not dinner late to-day?" So feeling, too, she could return no gracious answer, she was silent.

"My love," said Mr. Gervoise, sitting up in his chair, "I am afraid you are not attending to me."

There was something in Mr. Gervoise's tone that irritated Mrs. Gordon extremely. It implied

authority. She looked up at him and replied coldly.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Gervoise, I am attending to you. Dinner is late, as you say. I had it delayed in consequence of your going out with Miss Jameson."

"You did very well, my dear. A very superior person that Miss Jameson. You will be happy to learn that I have engaged her services for Beatrice. Beatrice wants a governess; Miss Jameson will do."

"Without consulting me!" said Mrs. Gordon with sparkling eyes.

"My dearest love, am I not Beatrice's guardian?"

He spoke with irritating calmness. But he was Beatrice's guardian indeed, and Mrs. Gordon was wise enough not to pursue the argument, to which dinner put an end for the time being. Now, Mr. Gervoise was very particular about dinner. He liked good cookery, and he was not so far anglicized as to admire underdone meat and watery vegetables.

"This is not fit to eat," he said, pushing his plate away; "I must alter that. There is a Monsieur Panel who is now disengaged, a *chef* of the first water. I think I must secure his services."

"A man-cook!" said Mrs. Gordon.

"Yes, my love, why not?"

"A man-cook! a governess of eighty pounds a year for Beatrice! Was Mr. Gervoise rich then,

richer than she had thought!" Mrs. Gordon was not mercenary, but the thought softened her considerably. If Mr. Gervoise really was so very rich, his affection for her, poor as he knew her to be, was assuredly generous and disinterested. She forgot Miss Jameson, and only thought and felt that to be the wife of a rich and kind husband was a very pleasant thing after all.

"I suppose Monsieur Panel is very clever?" she said

"He is more than clever, he is admirable. A wonderful man—a genius, my dear!"

"And you really mean to have him?"

"Yes, my love. I need not tell you that we are not going to remain at Rosemary Cottage. I am going to take a house in Piccadilly, facing the Green Park. I like Piccadilly, do you?"

Mrs. Gordon's head felt in a whirl.

A house in Piccadilly, a man-cook, a governess! Then she supposed he meant to keep his carriage. But she did not say so. She said nothing. She was afraid of committing herself by some indiscreet remark, and she would not let Mr. Gervoise suspect her secret satisfaction. But he saw it, nevertheless, for there was very little that escaped his eye, and he half smiled to behold her puerile attempt at concealment. As if he did not know the meaning of the raised colour

and the kindling look, and the exulting smile!

"My love," said Mr. Gervoise, when the servant had removed the cloth, "I am anxious about Beatrice."

Mrs. Gordon looked uneasy, but said nothing. Mr. Gervoise pursued:

"She is a very susceptible child, and it is very plain our marriage pains her. Why grieve her uselessly?"

He seemed to expect an answer to this, but Mrs. Gordon gave him none.

"Why grieve her uselessly, poor little dear," resumed Mr. Gervoise, "by compelling her to behold our wedding, for instance? Why not marry quietly and privately one of these days? It would spare her, poor little love!"

Still Mrs. Gordon did not reply, but Mr. Gervoise could see she was not very averse to this plan. She secretly dreaded Beatrice's stormy tears and entreaties, and Mr. Gervoise's suggestion afforded a sort of escape. Beatrice must submit, once the thing was done.

"Allow me to argue the matter with you," said Mr. Gervoise, sitting down by her on the sofa. Mr. Gervoise's line of argument was made up of so many subtle threads that we must not attempt to follow it out; but what with a journey which he must take the next day, and what with his fear of Beatrice's having a second attack, and what with

his amazement to learn that Miss Jameson was not fifty-five, he argued to such purpose that he and Mrs. Gordon went out early together the next morning, and that when they came back to breakfast Mrs. Gordon was no more, and Mrs. Gervoise filled the chair of that defunct lady.

Immediately after breakfast, the happy bridegroom went off in a cab, and Mrs. Gervoise rather remorsefully devoted herself to the unconscious Beatrice. The child was still feverish, and by her half-pettish, half-passionate entreaties, "Don't marry him, mamma, don't," justified the prudence of the course Mr. Gervoise had adopted.

"Ah! what a wedding-day!" thought Mrs. Gervoise, who felt very much worried. For she remembered another wedding-day very different from this, a day of sunshine and love, when a girl of eighteen and a man of twenty-five had thought themselves blest among their kind. But it was hard, very hard, to think of the first husband on the day when she had taken the second, so Mrs. Gervoise made a desperate effort to forget, and wondered if Beatrice would get over it, and where Mr. Gervoise was gone to; but even this latter thought would take no hold on her mind; still she went back to the little church in Scotland, where she was married, with friends around her, and she contrasted that bright cheerful ceremony with the

morning's dull secret work. I ought to have known better," she thought rather indignantly; "why should I be afraid of my own child? I ought to have got married openly, and not kept it a secret."

But for all that she kept it a secret still, and though the day passed and night came, she did not tell Beatrice, who got up to dine, but, feeling tired, asked to go to bed again as soon as the meal was over. She was fast asleep, and her mother was sitting by her, thinking again that this was a very dreary wedding-day, when she suddenly heard Mr. Gervoise's voice below. She listened; yes, it was he, and he was asking Gilbert where she was. Mrs. Gervoise went down rather flurried and rather surprised, for he was to have been a week away, and found her husband in the parlour, overflowing with smiles and good-humour.

"You are amazed," he said blandly; "and so am I—but I had not got beyond three stations before I was obliged to turn back, and so, my love, I came straight to you. Do not trouble about me. I had a capital dinner in town. And how is Beatrice?"

"Beatrice is much better."

"Sweet little dear. Have you told her?"

"Not yet."

"Just so—just so. I have just told Gilbert, he

will break it to her; and now, my love, I have got something for you."

He went and sat down by her, and he looked so pleasant and so fond that Mrs. Gervoise, we cannot deny it, expected a diamond, at the very least, to be laid on her lap by the happy bridegroom. Mr. Gervoise may have read the meaning of her flushed face; at all events, he was smiling outright when he took a copy of the *Times* out of his pocket and laid it before her. Mrs. Gervoise could scarcely conceal her disappointment.

"Well, what is that for?" she said a little crossly.

"Look at the marriages, my dear."

Mrs. Gervoise took the supplement sheet and glanced impatiently over it; but even as she looked she turned ghastly pale, and, dropping the paper, gave her husband a scared look.

"My dear, what is the matter?" he cried with an alarmed start.

Mrs. Gervoise did not answer, but she clenched her hands, and bit her nether lip.

"But what is it?" he persisted. "You make me feel quite anxious. My dear love, speak, I entreat you!"

Mrs. Gervoise turned to her husband and looked at him with a cold, hard look; and with a cold, hard, and very bitter voice, she said, whilst her

forefinger pointed to the paper on the floor, "Look and see, Mr. Gervoise."

Mr. Gervoise looked the picture of astonishment and dismay.

"My dear, will you explain?" he began.

"Look and see," she interrupted harshly, and she drew as far away from him as the length of the sofa allowed.

Seeing he could extract nothing further from her, Mr. Gervoise, still bewildered and amazed, at length picked up the paper and glanced over it in his turn. To his annoyance, as he said afterwards, he saw neither his name nor Mrs. Gervoise's in the marriage list of the second edition of the *Times*; but on a line with that important part of the supplement, he saw a lengthy advertisement, headed, "RICHARD GORDON." Mr. Gervoise read it, and so may we:—

"RICHARD GORDON, formerly of —, in the county of —, son of James Gordon of —, aforesaid, and of Charlotte Mary, his wife. Information wanted with regard to the said Richard Gordon. The said Richard Gordon, if now living, is entitled, under the will of the late Mr. Carnoosie, to the manor-house and estate of Carnoosie. If the said Richard Gordon will communicate with the undersigned, he may immediately be put in possession. If he died before the 6th of March,

18—, leaving issue then living, such issue take the aforesaid manor-house and estate. Information as to the said Richard Gordon (and if dead, as to the place and date of his death, and whether married and left any child, or children) may be communicated to the undersigned, and will be thankfully received. Dated this 21st day of March, 18—.

“C. WILLIAM CORKING,
Solicitor, of —.
W. & B. SHERINGHAM,
Solicitors of —.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Gervoise, dropping the paper, “is Mr. Carnoosie dead?”

“You knew him?” said his wife.

“Knew him! I spent a week at Carnoosie with him three months ago. Why, his children must be dead too! and he had two, poor man! I am quite shocked!”

Mrs. Gervoise twitched her fingers nervously; but she could not trust herself with speaking.

“Our dear Baatrice is now a rich woman,” said Mr. Gervoise, with a sigh for the dead and a gentle gleam of satisfaction for the living. “Poor little darling!”

“Mr. Gervoise, how long have you known this?” asked his wife.

“Something like five minutes, my dear.”

He looked hard at her from behind his glasses, and his eye said, "Deny it, if you dare!" She did not do so. Her eyes sought the carpet. Thoughts of desperate and useless anger might fill her heart, but did not venture to rise to her lips.

"I repeat it, Beatrice is a rich woman," emphatically said Mr. Gervoise. "Carnoosie is a noble place. The house is commodious; not a palace, you know, my dear, but a large old English house. The timber is splendid. The wines are first-rate; the pictures—I hope Mr. Carnoosie has not disposed of them—are choice. It is a noble place!"

She looked at him bitterly; eagerly she read his face. What exultation in that look! What unctuous satisfaction in that smile!

"He married me for this," she thought desperately; "for the wines, for the house, for the timber, the pictures, and the cook! He married me for this!"

Well, perhaps he did, Mrs. Gervoise. But what have you married him for? For nothing to do, for servants, and fine apparel, and comfort, and the rearing of your child. It was a bargain; a sorry one on your part, a capital one on his—the best bargain he ever made. His first marriage, which brought him in the Château of Verville for his life; his second marriage, which gave him a

pleasant cottage near Carnoosie, during his younger son's minority, were nothing to this.

"My love," said Mr. Gervoise, seemingly quite unconscious of the turn Mrs. Gervoise's thoughts were taking, "where is the child?—where is our Beatrice?"

"In bed," was his wife's short reply.

"Then we must call her up. Beatrice must come down and learn the news."

"I think, Mr. Gervoise, the news will keep—they have kept some time."

"My dear, what would Beatrice say later if she learned that I had withheld this precious intelligence even one night? She must come down!"

Mrs. Gervoise did not answer. Mr. Gervoise rang the bell, and gave his directions to the maid who answered it. In a few minutes the door opened again, and Beatrice, wrapped in a large plaid shawl, beneath the fringe of which appeared the white edge of her night-dress, scarcely covering her little bare feet, was brought into the room. She lay half awake in the servant's arms, but her dark eyes were bright as diamonds, and her cheeks had a rosy flush. Her little nightcap had got on one side, and her black curls peeped out from under it. The servant put her down on a high chair, and there Beatrice remained solemnly sitting, with her feet dangling down, and her dark eyes

slowly wakening to intelligence and thought.

"My love," began Mr. Gervoise.

"Where is Gilbert?" interrupted Beatrice. "I want Gilbert."

"Mary, tell Gilbert to come directly," promptly said Mr. Gervoise.

Gilbert, who was reading alone in the back parlour, came out at Mary's bidding, and, with a half-smile, went and stood by Beatrice's chair.

When the door had closed on the servant-girl, Mr. Gervoise resumed :

"My love, I have news for you! Mr. Carnoosie is dead. Mr. Carnoosie's children preceded him to the grave—so uncertain is human life—and you are now the mistress of the manor-house and estate of Carnoosie."

We are sorry to record it, but, to the moral and pathetic part of this speech, Beatrice paid little or no attention; and, so strong and sure a hold does mammon take, even on innocent, youthful minds, her eyes actually sparkled on hearing that she owned the old red house, with the four fountains, and the noble trees, which had haunted her childish dreams.

"Yes," repeated Mr. Gervoise, with due emphasis, "you, Beatrice Gordon, are the mistress of Carnoosie!"

The young queen, whose sovereignty was thus

proclaimed, clapped her hands with glee, and jumped down on the carpet. The shawl fell from her, and she stood in her white robe, like any little antique priestess. Her first impulse was a true royal one.

"Gilbert," she cried, impetuously, "what shall I give you?"

Gilbert laughed.

"Will you have a tree?" cried Beatrice. "I shall give you the biggest!"

"Very touching—very affecting!" said Mr. Gervoise. "But, bless me!" he cried, with a start, "that child might take cold. Gilbert, put that shawl around her, and run for her slippers!"

Mr. Gervoise spoke with unfeigned anxiety. What if that precious child should take cold and cough! What if the cough should settle on her lungs, and consumption carry her off in her bloom! Gilbert at once put the shawl around Beatrice, and went for Beatrice's slippers. Now Beatrice had another of the royal instincts—she liked being waited upon. When Gilbert came back with a pair of warm felt shoes, she gravely held out one foot to be shod, then the other, and Gilbert, kneeling on the floor, as gravely put her shoes on, and tied the strings, demurely looking in Beatrice's face all the time.

"My dear Beatrice," affectionately said Mr. Gervoise, "I called you up to hear the great tidings,

and now, for the sake of your health, allow me to advise you to go back to bed."

It was lucky that the advice suited Beatrice, but it so happened that it did suit her, so she made no objection, until Mr. Gervoise added :

"Mary shall carry you up-stairs."

Upon which, stamping her little feet, Beatrice cried vehemently :

"I will not let Mary carry me up ! Gilbert shall carry me up !"

"Certainly," said Mr. Gervoise. "Gilbert, carry Miss Gordon upstairs."

Nothing loth, Gilbert obeyed, and Beatrice went upstairs on his back.

"My love," said Mr. Gervoise, squeezing his wife's hand, "I think we may safely predict what the future of these children will be."

Mrs. Gervoise did not answer. She was very pale, and she felt bitterly unhappy. Beatrice's first thought on learning that she was mistress of Carnoosie had not been for her mother, but for Gilbert. She had wounded her child's heart, and unconsciously her child's heart was turning from her. Oh ! if she had known what she knew now, she would have said "No" at the very foot of the altar.

If ever morning's work was repented ere the day was done, it was this.

CHAPTER X.

MR. CARNOOSIE'S will surprised everyone, and most of all the two persons who thought themselves best acquainted with its contents. It was exactly like the duplicate in Mr. Gervoise's possession, with the exception of three explanatory codicils, which rather altered some of its main features. By the first of these codicils Mr. Carnoosie appointed Mr. Raby, who was travelling, poor man, unconscious of his fate, to be Mr. Gervoise's fellow-trustee. By the second he revoked Mrs. Gordon's jointure, and every legacy he had made in favour of his servants and dependants; and by the third he tied up the property, and provided for the emergency of Mr. Gordon's decease, and even of the decease of Mr. Gordon's childless issue, in a manner which Mr. Gervoise did not scruple to call arbitrary and foolish.

The will was so worded, however, that Richard Gordon, and failing him his children, came into

the Carnoosie property without opposition ; that Mr. Gervoise's trusteeship was disputed by no one ; and that, as Beatrice's guardian, he resolved to take up his residence in Carnoosie until that young lady became of age ; and as she was now between eight and nine, Mr. Gervoise could be said to have a pretty long lease of a very pleasant abode, and of rather a pleasant life.

The satisfaction with which the worthy gentleman viewed the subject before him was not shared by Mrs. Scot, now a dependant on his kindness ; and it was with secret wrath and irritation that this lady sat in her room in Carnoosie waiting for the arrival of her young mistress.

It was a pleasant room, one of the most comfortable in Carnoosie ; for comfort was the rule of her life, and this room looked made for long hours of laborious repose. The bureau was ample ; here could be kept the accounts of generations of Carnoosies. The heavy window curtains let in the green light from the garden ; it was the best thing no doubt for Mrs. Scot's eyes, fatigued with casting up figures. The high leather chair, with its broad arms, was also the best comforter for a wearied back. The very footstool—there was but one—looked inviting, as the carpet felt pleasant to the feet ; but though this room had long been hers, and though Mr. Gervoise had

written that morning to inform her that it was Miss Beatrice Gordon's pleasure that she should keep her present situation, Mrs. Scot was gloomy and dissatisfied.

The very best of us find it hard to be cheated and deceived, and Mrs. Scot was by no means one of the best. The late Mr. Carnoosie and her own hopes had deluded her in the past, and shamefully had Mr. Gervoise cheated her in the present. She had not bargained to be his servant. Where was that Mr. Gordon about whom he had so pertinaciously plagued her master? It would have been something to be under one of the old stock, and not at the beck of that wily Frenchman who had cunningly married the poor widow. Cordially did Mrs. Scot dislike him for his perfidy, and dislike and contempt mingled in her feelings towards the unknown mistress of Carnoosie—a mistress who had not reached her teens; that was indeed something to boast of! Ah! if Mr. Carnoosie could see it from his grave, if he could behold that simple Mr. Gervoise coming down to take possession, and that little chit of a girl lording it in that mansion which he had been so anxious to secure to male blood, what a just judgment it would be upon him in the other world for his falsehood to her in this! But the other world was one of those subjects about which Mrs. Scot

had strong doubts. There are more practical atheists than England deems of in her bosom. They do not trouble themselves about pantheism, and a first cause, and the great mystery that lies at the root of creation; but they callously deny belief to all the eye sees not, and scorn with cold and bitter scorn the tender and lovely mysteries of faith. Thus the comfort of thinking Mr. Carnoosie punished after his death was denied to Mrs. Scot, and she was only sure of two things—her wrongs, and her hatred of the wronger.

But, as we say, she sat in her room waiting. Daylight faded from the sky, evening set in, Mrs. Scot's lamp was brought to her, and with it her dinner—Mrs. Scot always dined alone—and still there was no token of Mr. Gervoise's coming. At length, just as her meal was over, carriage wheels were heard along the avenue. Hastily Mrs. Scot went forth, and at the head of the steps, surrounded by the servants of the establishment, she received the travellers. Mr. Gervoise came first, bearing in his arms a precious burden, no less than Beatrice Gordon, fast asleep with fatigue. Near him stood his wife, with a wearied air. Miss Jameson, Gilbert, and two female servants brought up the rear.

"Your mistress, my friends!" said Mr. Gervoise, in his grand way, thus introducing the sleeping Beatrice to her retainers. The retainers, who were of

the homely kind, and not much used to introduction of that sort, stared and looked foolish, and were mute.

"Mrs. Scot, is Miss Gordon's room ready?" asked Mr. Gervoise.

"It is, sir."

"Please to lead the way."

Mrs. Scot took them upstairs to a room on the first floor. It was a large, stately apartment; but Mrs. Gervoise thought it dismal, and her heart fell as she entered it. Having carefully deposited the sleeping Beatrice on the very centre of the large, square, four-posted bed, Mr. Gervoise formally surrendered her to the care of her maid, and to the superintendence of Miss Jameson, and politely requesting his wife to accompany him, he withdrew, merely hinting to Mrs. Scot that she would oblige him by taking care of Gilbert. As they passed arm-in-arm through suites of rooms, grand, but, as Mrs. Gervoise felt, formal and dreary, preceded by a couple of servants bearing lights, Mr. Gervoise's blue eyes lit with triumph, and his footstep had an elastic tread which did not escape his wife's ear. She thought him triumphant, and so he was; but even she could not know or imagine how that triumph had been reared. She by no means shared his exultation, as they now passed through the rooms of Carnoosie. Mrs. Gervoise was of the

middle class, and she had none of the tastes of grandeur. Large houses, wide rooms, a country residence, half frightened, and decidedly wearied her. She disliked Carnoosie from the first, and longed, with the longing of one born within the sound of Bow bells, for London, and its theatres, and parties, and pleasures. But as she looked at her husband, she felt the dreary certainty that these were for ever lost to her. Mr. Gervoise was of the middle class too, but he had an ambitious turn. He liked mansions, and the solitary state of a country life; and he had lost his heart to Carnoosie from the very first moment he had seen it—an old red mansion surrounded by majestic trees.

“My love,” he said to his wife, when the servants had shown them to their own apartment, “do you not think that Carnoosie is very fine?”

“It is dreary,” said Mrs. Gervoise, with a sigh.

“Dreary! It is a noble place! Such pictures! you must see them to-morrow. The trees, too, and the wines! My love, let me never hear you call it dreary.”

Mrs. Gervoise, who was not sure that she could call her soul her own, did not venture to say a word.

Mr. Gervoise stretched himself in a vast arm-chair, rang the bell, and asked for a bottle of the old Burgundy—Clos-Vougeot, he took care to inform

the servant who transmitted the order to the butler. Presently a bottle of the precious vintage, fit for emperors and kings, was brought up, with a couple of glasses, and a plateful of biscuits. Mr. Gervoise poured himself out a glass of wine, sipped it slowly, and thought :

“ I have got into Carnoosie ; well and good ! Let the child but live—and she must live—I am sure of the place for twelve good years at the least ; but, indeed, I may say for life ; for, of course, she will marry Gilbert.”

Some have been called wise in their generation—we know when and how. Of these Mr. Gervoise was surely one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE apple-trees were in full bloom. Every wide-stretching bough was laden with rich thick clustering rosy blossoms. The bright sun of spring, more bright than genial, a sun tempered by cool breezes, filled the green orchard of Carnoosie—green below, for earth had put on her covering of first fresh verdure ; white and pink above, for the fruit-trees were more rich in blossom than in foliage ; a dome of the blue sky inclosed all, and finished the great picture, beautiful and fresh, but beyond the painter's art. Who can paint air and delicious sounds of wakening life, and breezes laden with sweetness, and waving grass, and the first promises of spring, as she comes down to us, her lap full of early flowers, and the hope of a long summer and a wealthy autumn in her mien !

Pleasant and wide was the orchard of Carnoosie. The trees met in a long green arcade, ending in a gay vista of the flower-garden, and of red Car-

noosie, an old brick mansion, which looked gorgeous and Venetian when the setting sun shed a crimson glow athwart its many-windowed front.

A cheerful dwelling was Carnoosie. There were stately trees in the grounds around it, oaks, elms, and beeches, of mighty size and majestic breadth, that met the adjoining forest, of which they had once formed part, and to which they could still claim kin, for no stain of degeneracy had reached them, but they had been kept at a safe distance from the house. It stood on a rise of ground, surrounded by a broad, cheerful terrace, with a balustrade and stone vases, and looking over four gay and sunny parterres full of flowers. In the centre of each parterre played a bright fountain, with its waters for ever glancing and dancing in the sun.

These four un-English, Italian fountains were the great feature of Carnoosie, its distinctive line of separation from any other manorial dwelling far or near. Some people did not like them, and thought that Carnoosie was a bare and desolate house after all, and perhaps it looked such when you stood close to it on a bleak winter's day, with the keen wind blowing stormily around it, or the dull white snow lying in a dreary pall on the four parterres, and icicles clinging to the slender stem rising from the centre of the stone basins; but in spring time, and seen from the orchard, with the

sun shining upon it, the tall trees of the forest forming a background to its bright red walls, and the gay colours of the flowers blending in one harmonious tint, and the white vases gleaming through the blue air, and the clear waters of the fountains dancing up in the morning light, Carnoosie looked as cheerful a dwelling as mortal eye ever saw.

So thought the little mistress of Carnoosie, as she sat at the foot of an old apple-tree, and looked at the house through her half-shut eyes. She had taken possession a week, and been left, with Gilbert, to the care of Miss Jameson, whilst Mr. and Mrs. Gervoise went to Scotland, there to transact some business which the late Richard Gordon had left unfinished.

The Scotch Gordons were a branch of the Carnoosies, and the Carnoosies had come in with Mary Stuart's son, and given their barbarous Scotch name to the estate with which they had been endowed by a gracious sovereign. There had been an Italian lady in this family. She had entered it in the days when Scottish Mary was young and gay, and had left a real Italian story of jealousy and murder behind her. She died young, but not childless, and long after her death, and when her story was passing away, a dark-eyed baby, with a Roman nose, had appeared, and grown up into a

lovely Juno. From this lady, who became a Mrs. Gordon, Beatrice was descended, and through her she got her black eyes, her laughing face, her teeth of pearl, and, with the beauty of her Italian ancestress, the English possessions of the Scotch Carnoosies; to wit, the old red house, the flower-garden, the grounds, and several broad and substantial farms.

It is pleasant to possess, even at the early age of nine, and Beatrice now said to Gilbert,

“I like Carnoosie—I wish you had a Carnoosie, Gilbert.”

She looked admiringly at the red Venetian walls of her old mansion.

Gilbert, who was lying on the grass, looked up at the blue sky, so far in real distance, so seemingly near when surrounding objects no longer told him of its remoteness. He had no Carnoosie, as Beatrice called landed property. The old château by the sea, with its conical turrets and its green court, might never be his, but the broad dome above was his wherever he went. This was his ancestral domain—wide, beautiful, and blue.

“I am tired of being here,” said Beatrice, starting up; “take me on your back, Gilbert, and let us go in and look at the rooms.”

“Put your arms round my neck. There you are!”

“Yes, and run now—faster, faster, Gilbert!”

And Gilbert ran, and thus bore her to Carnoosie, and Beatrice uttered shrill screams of delight all the way.

Liberty is sweet in childhood, and childhood rarely enjoys it. Family, study, propriety, ever step in and say, "This thou shalt not have," or, "Thou shalt do this." Later, this world's yoke is on us, and we bend to circumstances, and, when fetters are wanting, busily fashion them with our own hands, and wear them with happy complacency.

This liberty Gilbert and Beatrice enjoyed in its fulness. Mr. Ray, Gilbert's tutor, did not interfere, and Miss Jameson was the most facile and yielding of her race.

"We must go and tell her to ask Mrs. Scot for the keys," said Beatrice, as they entered the house and went up to Miss Jameson's room.

Miss Jameson was still the faded lady we saw at Rosemary Cottage, with a look of age and an air of youth. We will not venture to call her an old maid. Some of the signs given by a merciful world to the tribe she lacked; she was not neat, dogmatic, and uncharitable. Meek, negligent and untidy, Miss Jameson looked like an amiable good-for-nothing lady of ample means. She was fond of dress in a lazy way, and sailed about Carnoosie in robes of light texture and ample trimmings; or

sat in her room smoothing her hair, and reading to the sound of the splashing fountains. Beatrice was indolent, and Miss Jameson was rather more indolent than Beatrice. Besides, Mr. Gervoise had said,

“Make the child happy—do not tease her about her lessons.”

Miss Jameson, charmed at the prospect of long days of peace, had looked at Mr. Gervoise with admiring eyes, and praised his suggestion.

“It opened her mind to new views on education,” she said.

No doubt it did. Thus Beatrice took a few straggling lessons, and spent the best part of her time out with Gilbert, whilst Miss Jameson read or took a nap. We are afraid she was napping when the children knocked at her door, for her “Come in” was drowsy and slow, but, with good-humoured alacrity, she accompanied them to the house-keeper’s room and preferred their request.

This was market-day, and Mrs. Scot was always cross on market-day. Besides, two table-cloths were missing, and Mr. Gervoise would hold her answerable for the same; so, when Miss Jameson told her the children wished to see the rooms, Mrs. Scot said rather sternly,

“Well, ma’am, what about it?”

“Well, Beatrice cannot see the rooms unless you let us have the keys, Mrs. Scot.”

Miss Jameson spoke with spirit, for she was a great stickler for her dignity.

With suspicious suddenness the housekeeper called up a grim smile, and shedding its light on Beatrice, she said,

"The keys, oh! to be sure, miss, here they are in the basket. I cannot go with you, but please to mind them."

"They are my keys," replied Beatrice, snatching up the little basket; and taking Gilbert's hand, she danced out of the room, followed by Miss Jameson, who swelled and swayed her limp flounces to the fullest extent.

And now the red light of the declining sun fills the stately drawing-room of Carnoosie, and the children, tired with play, stand in the centre of the apartment. Bright sunbeams steal across the floor, up the faded silk hangings, and light up the black marble mantelpiece, and creep in threads of gold in every cranny.

The sunlight was warm and bright, but the room had a dreary look. Beatrice forgot it was her room, and crept close to Gilbert, half afraid. The lad was lifting up the white chair covers to see the furniture. It was gold picked with white, and on the backs and seats appeared ladies with the narrowest waists, and gentlemen with the widest coats, walking side by side in faded gardens, and looking

at the children with straight bead-like eyes. They were all alike, for the gentle cotemporary of the Georges, who had undertaken this mighty task, had not added the efforts of imagination to her labour. For evermore the same gentlemen and ladies walked in the same gardens, on the backs and seats of all the chairs.

From this room they passed into the next—madam's closet. They saw two chairs, a spindle-legged table, and a foot-length picture of a dark and stately lady in a ruff and peaked cap, which at once attracted Gilbert's attention. It was not a good painting, and had suffered much from time. Yet there was something in it, that something which in a portrait tells us of the living original in language we cannot mistake. In vain had years deepened into black the sombre varnish, and effaced the bloom of the young cheek, and turned into a dull grey the whiteness of the plump flesh, the woman from whom the portrait had been painted still looked at you from the canvas, and, as Gilbert felt, looked with Beatrice's eyes. Ay, these were the deep, dark, soft and lustrous eyes of little Beatrice Gordon. This was her Italian lip, too, and her antique profile, and her rich, dark, laughing face, that made one happy to look at.

Whatever might have been the tragic fate of Beatrice's Italian ancestress, this portrait of her, taken

in the bloom of youth and beauty, did not speak of a fatal ending. It overflowed with life and gladness. Such a face might look at you from among the vine leaves of a southern land, laughing and joyous as a Bacchante's. Yet the natural dignity of the southern races, that dignity free from stiffness, and which is so sweet and winning, appeared in the carriage of the figure, and again reminded Gilbert of little Beatrice. She had that graceful and erect bearing, that charming turn of the neck, that easy possession of her whole being. Gilbert felt this more than he thought it, but he felt it very keenly, and he was turning round to compare the lady with Beatrice, when he caught the irreverent descendant of the dead Italian making faces at her ancestress.

"How can you be so naughty, Beatrice? That is your grandmother, I am sure."

"I don't care," said Beatrice, tossing her curls, and going to the window.

The waving line of the forest on the sky suggested a new whim. Longingly she looked at it, and she so prayed and coaxed, that Gilbert promised to go and get a fern for her rock-work from that magic region; but first they should return the keys to Mrs. Scot. Beatrice suggested that she would keep them in her room, but she yielded to Gilbert's reasoning, and once more they sought

that dignitary. At once Gilbert asked who was the original of the portrait.

"The late Mr. Carnoosie always said it was the portrait of an Italian lady who married into the family in the days of Mary Queen of Scots," replied Mrs. Scot.

"She is very like Beatrice," said Gilbert.

"Why, yes, Master Gilbert, she is ; but let us hope there will be no likeness throughout."

"Why so ?" he quickly asked.

"Oh ! because that lady was not very happy, you know, and one can see it in her face, about the mouth—an unlucky mouth, I think."

And she looked hard at Beatrice, as if to find in her face the sign of misfortune, which the portrait was not there to supply. Beatrice frowned at her as she had frowned at the picture, and uttered an impatient "Come on," which Gilbert obeyed with nervous haste. He was too sensitive and imaginative not to be impressed with Mrs. Scot's remarks, and too shy and proud not to resent them secretly. What business had that stern housekeeper to detect signs of future grief and trouble in the sunny face of her little mistress ?

"And now you will get me the fern," said Beatrice.

"You must not come after me, Beatrice."

"Oh ! no."

A broad but short avenue of trees led from the house to the iron gate that divided Carnoosie from the forest. Through this gate Gilbert went forth, whilst Beatrice looked after him with longing eyes. Through the iron bars she could see the long solitary road. The low rays of the sinking sun that lit it in its whole length did not show one living creature along its yellow breadth; at both ends it closed in plains, bounded by a blue and indistinct horizon. But before Beatrice rose the forest, the wonderful, mysterious forest, through which Carnoosie had been cut in the days gone by, and another part of which met its extensive grounds towards the north. This forest Gilbert was now entering. He turned to look at Beatrice; then, like any prince or fairy knight, he vanished in its shadowy gloom. She saw him for a while moving amongst the mighty trunks of the ancient trees; then they seemed to close upon him, and Gilbert was gone.

The hour was beautiful and quiet. There was not a sound in the air, save of the birds, who twittered and flew about as they prepared for their evening rest. Some perched on a bough, sang very sweetly to their mate and their young, and told once more the wonderful story of love, old as creation, young as life. It was very beautiful, but Gilbert did not come back. The sun sank, a ball

of fire and gold, behind the purple horizon, and still he did not return.

"I wish he would," thought Beatrice, peering anxiously through the iron bars to which she clung with her little hands; but still time passed, and her young knight was invisible. Beatrice was impetuous, she flew across the road, and, unseen by the keeper at the gate, entered the forest. It was solemn at that hour, dim and grey, with blue mists at the end of every path. The majestic trees, and they were noble amongst their race, spread their vast branches above her head; but Beatrice loved trees, and we do not fear what we love. She ran, calling out, "Gilbert! Gilbert!"

A shout answered her. She followed his voice, and found him sitting on the felled trunk of a decayed oak.

"I found you!" cried Beatrice, "I found you!"

"I have sprained my ankle, Beatrice; I cannot walk; go and tell them to come for me."

She thought he was jesting, and when he convinced her that he was not, Beatrice, though ready to cry, turned back obediently. She ran in her haste, and stumbled over roots of trees and branches torn off by recent gales; but the path, so short on her coming, had lengthened strangely on her return. It was a broad avenue with a patch of sky and a large star, but Beatrice saw neither the

gate nor the square front, nor the lighted windows of Carnoosie. She stopped short, helpless and frightened, and in her terror called out "Gilbert!" "Gilbert!" Luckily he heard her. His voice led her back to him once more. With a joyful cry she sprang into his arms, and clung to him, and hid her face against his breast.

Gilbert was in great pain; but he did not complain. He held Beatrice fast, and comforted her, and she looked up shyly at the stately trees, and wondered at their heavy nodding boughs. An early morn had risen, and, hanging in the zenith, sent down soft vague rays that silvered many an old trunk on its way.

"I like trees," said Beatrice suddenly.

"Why so?" asked Gilbert, struck with her tone.

But childhood rarely has the gift of putting its feelings into words. Beatrice liked trees with a liking which years were to ripen into a passion, but she could not then say why. She liked their size, their majesty, their shade, vast and cool, and what she had heard of their long life impressed her. Their duration seemed to her a sort of eternity. As the traveller gazes on the cedars of Lebanon, coeval with wise and mighty Solomon and the building of the Temple, so did Beatrice look at the oaks which had flourished a hundred years and more around Carnoosie. Mrs. Scot had told her

that the oldest amongst them were planted long before Beatrice's great-great-grandfather was born; and she added the stern information, "and they will be fine oaks still, Miss, long after you have been buried in the old church with the Carnoosies."

Beatrice had heard her with awe, and henceforth reverence was added to her love for the kings and princes of the forest. We all have some secret communion with Nature, some fine and subtle link by which we are bound to the great mother. To some it lies in the wild roar of ocean, in long sweeps of brown shore, edged with stormy foam, in rocky coast, and scenery pregnant with the sights and sounds of tempest. To others the clear lake, the stream flowing in its bed of sand, the leaping waterfall, are as the heart's desire. To others, again, the forest, solemn, mysterious, full of vague whispers and sweet sounds, the world of wild birds and free creatures that find shelter beneath its green roof, the realm where noble trees expand, where every rough trunk encloses a mighty life, which every spring renews, and over which ages seem to have no power to these, we say, trees are the source of a mysterious joy akin to happiness.

Thus felt Beatrice. She loved trees, she knew not why, but she loved them. No Dryad ever loved them more, and it was partly owing to that love

that, on this evening, she felt little fear. Her forest friends were around her. They were very big and mighty, and she felt a very little child near them, but they were friends. Beatrice knew it, and sitting thus, with her hand on Gilbert's shoulder, and her arms clasped around his neck, she felt vaguely happy, and, with the ignorant selfishness of her years, made herself comfortable, whilst poor Gilbert was getting dizzy and faint with the fatigue of his forced attitude and the pain of his swollen foot.

At length relief came. The sound of a horse's hoofs echoed in the avenue of the forest. Gilbert at once raised his voice and shouted. A pause followed, then the horse was heard approaching, and a man's loud and distinct tones asked :

"Who's there?"

Gilbert was going to name himself, but Beatrice forestalled him.

"I am Beatrice Gordon," she said; "the mistress of Carnoosie," she added, with her childish dignity.

"Eh?" said the stranger's voice, in a tone of sharp surprise, which showed that neither Beatrice's name nor station was unknown to him.

"I have sprained my ankle, and that is how we are here," quietly observed Gilbert.

"Sprained your ankle, have you?" replied the stranger, who was no other than Doctor Rogerson,

a young medical man who had recently settled near Carnoosie. "Well, I am the very best person for you then. Let us see!"

Doctor Rogerson immediately alighted, and, fastening his horse to a tree, approached the two children. There was light enough for him to see them, and a few questions convinced him of the need in which they stood of his assistance.

"I cannot take you to Carnoosie," he said. "I do not know the forest well enough for that, but I can take you to my cottage, which is close by, attend to you there, and send word to Carnoosie by my man-servant, who knows the road well enough."

Gilbert thanked him in his quiet way; and as it was said, so was it done. Doctor Rogerson set the lad on his horse, in the position calculated to give him least pain; and leading the animal, a meek one enough, by the bridle, he took little Beatrice by the hand that was free, and, thus accompanied, made his way out of the forest. The moon was no longer visible, but all the brighter shone the light that burned in the young doctor's cottage; and, as their approach was heard, the low cottage door flew open, a pale figure appeared on the threshold, whilst a gay young voice asked, in cheerful tones:

"Edward, is that you?"

Edward replied that it was himself, and no other, and in a few words explained what had happened.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the young voice, with genuine kindness in its tones, "how lucky you met them!"

"Yes, my dear, it is lucky; but James must go to Carnoosie at once, and we want a light."

The young wife flew in, and came out with a candle in her hand. Its light shone on her fresh fair face beaming with gentle anxiety. At once she took charge of Beatrice, whilst Doctor Rogerson carried Gilbert in. They passed through a pretty little sitting-room, with its chintz furniture still in its bridal freshness—Doctor Rogerson's honeymoon was scarcely over—and in the next room, a plainer one, but also newly decorated, Gilbert was put down. Doctor Rogerson carefully placed him in an arm-chair, and at once attended to his swollen foot.

"You will have to stay quiet for a few weeks," said Doctor Rogerson, shaking his head gravely; "but I suppose you can bear that?"

Gilbert replied that he could; but, on hearing Doctor Rogerson's decree, Beatrice stamped her foot, and vehemently declared:

"Gilbert must not stay quiet! I will not let him! He must not!"

She spoke with imperious wilfulness. Doctor Rogerson smiled an amused smile, and turned round to pinch Beatrice's cheek; but he remembered that she was the mistress of Carnoosie, and he did not take the liberty. Indeed, it occurred to him that Mrs. Rogerson ought not to have left that young lady, and, calling her in, he whispered as much. Save that she resisted Mrs. Rogerson's attempt to take her from the room, Beatrice received that lady's attentions with evident pleasure, and when tea was brought in, and the four sat down to it, nothing could exceed the sociability of the little party.

But it was soon broken up. Scarcely was tea over, when Miss Jameson came in the carriage to fetch the two children. She looked pale and ill with the fright she had had at their disappearance, and was more intent on reprimanding Beatrice than on thanking Doctor Rogerson. Mrs. Rogerson she scarcely looked at. But Beatrice, little accustomed to reproof from that quarter, only laughed carelessly; and Doctor Rogerson, who gently shook his forefinger at her, laughed too, to Miss Jameson's great indignation; moreover, he insisted on accompanying his patient home, notwithstanding the governess's resistance. Sprained ankles, he assured Miss Jameson, were serious affairs, and gently overruling her, he stepped into

the carriage, and drove off to Carnoosie, gracefully waving his hand to his young wife, whose eyes sparkled with pleasure and pride.

"Quite an adventure," thought Mrs. Rogerson, re-entering the cottage in a state of agreeable excitement. "I must sit down and write to Jane at once!"

And so she did. The prettily-furnished chintz sitting-room owned a dainty little bureau, which was devoted to Mrs. Rogerson's use. She had been a zealous letter-writer before her marriage, as most English young ladies are, and she was too newly married, and had seen as yet too little of the cares of married life, to have lost the gentle habit. So she sat down and wrote to Jane, her favourite sister, and in her prolix, chatting way told her the wonderful story. She headed it "*The Babes in the Wood*," in italics. It began with a vivid description of the forest, and ended with another description, rather a graphic one, of Miss Jameson, whom she called "an old faded blonde, my dear! you know what I mean."

Ay! Mrs. Rogerson, and so does Time! Look at yourself now, in the new mirror above the mantel-shelf; your hair is golden, and your cheek is rosy, and you have the reddest of red young lips, but let a few years pass, and that mirror will tell another tale. Question it not, then, or if you

do, forget how, in the pride and insolence of youth, you passed judgment on poor faded Miss Jameson.

“Well,” continues Mrs. Rogerson’s nimble pen, “that old piece of faded blonde steps into the carriage, and actually wants to argue Doctor Rogerson against accompanying her; but I need not tell you that Doctor Rogerson, who is a rock in professional matters, insisted on going; and so he drove off in the old family carriage with the Carnoosie arms on the panel.”

As Mrs. Rogerson gave this little finishing touch to the picture, Doctor Rogerson returned, not in the carriage with the Carnoosie arms, however, and entered the room with a cheerful

“To whom are you writing, my dear?”

His wife replied, with a pretty smile, that she was writing to Jane, and, bending over her chair, her husband read the unfinished letter. It amused him greatly; he patted his wife’s cheek, and, sitting down by her, began discussing the night’s adventure.

“Very fortunate for us,” he remarked. “This cottage took my fancy the moment I saw it. I felt convinced it was just the place for a medical man, and you see, my dear, already a splendid connexion is opening before us. That lad’s brother is our landlord, you know—a minor, and his father

married the heiress's mother. Very wealthy people—just the thing for me—and without seeking, too. No toadying, my love; all reliance on my own honourable exertions and professional skill."

"Just so," murmured his wife.

"I shall always keep up my pride and independence," continued Doctor Rogerson, whose face bore as yet but few tokens of this world's trials; with your little fortune and my own few hundreds before us, I hope I can do without currying any man's favour, were he a peer of the realm."

"I am sure you would not do that to a prince," said his wife.

She leaned her head on her husband's shoulder, and looked up in his face. He stooped and kissed her fondly. They had loved years, and had been married but a few weeks. Everything was new to them: wedded bliss, life and its trials. Their love was a rock, their honour had not a speck. No pair of butterflies ever went forth on a May morning with gilded wings less harmed as yet by this world's dust or rain.

CHAPTER XII.

A COUCH in the library was now Gilbert's fate. The library was a large room on the ground floor, full of books, and dimly lighted by three deep windows. Near one of these Gilbert's couch was placed. Thence his eye could rest on the cheerful and sunlit terrace, or wander over the flower garden, with a vista of a green avenue and a white statue beyond. If studiously inclined, Gilbert preferred another prospect—the room afforded it—shelves of dark bound books stretched along the walls and rose from the floor to the ceiling, patiently waiting for a friendly hand. Here for several weeks Gilbert received Mr. Ray's lessons, and the restless Beatrice sat by him reading and studying too, to Miss Jameson's surprise. But no sooner was the patient released than the pair returned to the old life, and, faithful to the rule of love, Miss Jameson allowed Beatrice to wander about Carnoosie with Gilbert.

Thus two months had passed away when we

again find the two in the orchard. The flush of dying day dyes with a deeper glow the boughs laden with young fruit; the grass below is bright and golden, and the warm light lingers around the dark Beatrice and the fair-haired Gilbert as they sit at the foot of the old apple-tree. Suddenly Beatrice, supple and quick as a young panther, makes a spring at Gilbert. A remonstrative "Beatrice!" does not check her, and most indecorous, unyoung-ladylike is Beatrice's behaviour. Gilbert is satisfied with the mildest of resistance, and will not be provoked into retaliation; so that little tyrant Beatrice has it all her own way, until a voice utters a friendly "Well, children," which puts a sudden end to the unequal contest.

Beatrice started to her feet, and pushed back the curls from her flushed face; then uttered a cry, and sprung into her mother's arms with a joyful transport.

"My dear, be calm, do not agitate yourself," anxiously said Mr. Gervoise; "I think you had better put down the child," he added persuasively. At once, and with prompt obedience, Mrs. Gervoise put away Beatrice, who knit her fine dark eyebrows, and scowled most determinedly at her stepfather, guardian, and trustee.

"Come and give me a kiss, my love?" he asked, with a gracious smile.

"I won't!" was Beatrice's sharp and rude reply.

Mr. Gervoise shook his forefinger at her; then, turning to his son, he welcomed him affectionately.

"You are growing quite a man, my dear boy," he said, surveying him with paternal pride; "and you are studying hard, Mr. Ray tells me. Remember, my dear Gilbert, ever remember that you cannot gratify your father's heart more truly than by improving yourself and becoming a useful and active member of society."

Gilbert did not answer. He looked very earnestly at his father, then from him to Mrs. Gervoise, whose wistful blue eyes rested on Beatrice.

"The child has grown," she said to her husband.

"She has; and she is improved. Perhaps, my dear, you would like to take her by the hand. I think you may do that."

Beatrice, on hearing this gracious permission, gave her guardian another frown, and clinging to her mother's skirts, attempted to lead her away; but Mrs. Gervoise was already too well disciplined to yield, and indeed no sooner did Mr. Gervoise hint that she stood in need of rest, than she said with a little nervous start:

"Go and play, Beatrice."

Beatrice attempted to resist; but her once-yielding mother was firm, and dismissed her. Gilbert took Beatrice's hand, and led her away.

They went no farther than one of the four fountains. Beatrice looked at its falling waters, then flung her arms around Gilbert's neck, and burst into tears.

"Hush!" he said, "they can see us."

"I don't care," angrily replied Beatrice, "Carnosie is mine."

Gilbert did not argue with her, but he had his own thoughts. She had never felt the yoke—she was still untamed and unconquered; he had groaned beneath it, and though silenced and outwardly obedient, he was inwardly a rebel—ay! and a greater one than Beatrice!

Mr. Gervoise was watching them curiously from within. He was short-sighted, and could not detect Beatrice's tears; but Beatrice's mother saw them, and sighed behind her husband's chair. Mr. Gervoise turned round and gave her a surprised look.

"My love," he said, with gentle reproof, "did I not tell you you were tired? I am sure you feel it."

"Ye—es," hesitatingly replied Mrs. Gervoise; "but I should like to see Beatrice again."

"My love, you can see her to-morrow. Many mothers have not the happiness of seeing their children daily, and I have had thoughts of having our Beatrice educated in France."

Mrs. Gervoise gave her husband a frightened look.

He continued : " My tenderness for you restrained me. I hope you appreciate my motive ? "

Mrs. Gervoise murmured that she did.

" And now, my love, will you go and rest, and send Mrs. Scot to me, please."

Mrs. Gervoise went, and Mr. Gervoise leaned back in his chair, folded his hands, and half shut his eyes. He sat near one of the windows, and the warm western light fell on his face, and it was a handsome face, with fine classical lines. His flowing, fair hair, his large blue eyes, his fine figure, added to his prepossessing appearance. Mr. Gervoise had also grand, courteous manners, as we know ; yet, as a rule, he was rather feared than loved. We have seen Mrs. Scot grim and sharp, but if we want to see her subdued, let us watch her now as she enters the room. With hesitating step, with restless look, Mrs. Scot walks towards her master ; and Mr. Gervoise, who is watching her through his half-shut eyes, and from behind his glasses, wakes up with a start, and welcomes her courteously, and bids her take a chair, for he has a good deal to say.

" Mrs. Scot," he suavely began, " Monsieur Panel, who arrived yesterday, is henceforth to rule over the kitchen of Carnoosie. The health of Mrs. Gervoise and of our dear little daughter required his presence here, and I commend him to your special care."

"Very well, sir," grimly replied Mrs. Scot.

"Please to touch the bell, Mrs. Scot, and to ask for Monsieur Panel ; but do not go yet. We must have a little further conversation."

Mrs. Scot obeyed, and a pale, gentlemanlike-looking man with a moustache soon made his appearance.

"Monsieur Panel," said Mr. Gervoise, "I want a trifle by seven. A mere trifle, something strengthening, if you please. What can I have?"

"A consommé, fish, fowl——"

"That will do, Monsieur Panel. I leave it to you. Nothing debilitating, if you please. I look strong, and am delicate ; whereas Mrs. Gervoise, who looks delicate, is very robust. She never touches a morsel between her meals, whereas I must have food frequently. I leave it all to you, Monsieur Panel. Accept my thanks beforehand."

Monsieur Panel laid his hand on his heart, bowed, and withdrew.

"I feel quite exhausted," said Mr. Gervoise to Mrs. Scot, "and I have thirteen letters to write to-night. My connection is painfully extensive, but I must keep it up, for the dear child's sake ; and now, Mrs. Scot, how have matters been going on ? How did the servants behave ?"

"It's no use complaining, sir."

"How true! No changes?"

"It's no use changing them people, sir."

"Mrs. Scot, I admire your judgment! Well, you know my wishes. Let us have a liberal household. Spare no expense, Mrs Scot. Ah! by-the-bye, what do the servants say of me?"

"Nothing, sir; I would not allow it."

"Ah! just so. And the county. What does the county say of me?"

"I never leave Carnoosie, sir."

"Ah! to be sure. Well, that is all, I believe. Will you kindly send John to me with the key of the gallery? You need not trouble to bring it yourself, Mrs. Scot."

Mrs. Scot rose and moved towards the door; suddenly Mr. Gervoise called her back.

"How do you think I look, Mrs. Scot?" he asked in a tone of alarm. "A sudden faintness has just come over me. I fear I must look ill. I feel ill."

"You don't look ill, sir!"

"Don't I! And what about Miss Jameson, Mrs. Scot? I thought she looked poorly. I hope I was mistaken?"

Vicious animation appeared on Mrs. Scot's face.

"Miss Jameson oversleeps herself, sir; nothing else ails her that I know of."

"Dear me!—I must argue with her. Too much sleep brings on a full habit."

"She is sleeping now," continued Mrs. Scot.
"She is always sleeping."

"Dangerous and wrong. I shall positively go and find her out. And does my daughter, Miss Gordon, sleep too?"

"No, sir, Miss Beatrice runs wild, rather."

"She is a delightful little romp, I know—I know—that will do, Mrs. Scot, that will do."

Thus dismissed, Mrs. Scot left the room. To give wholesome advice, and to give it speedily, was, Mr. Gervoise often said, the true test of a benevolent heart. He lost no time in putting this wise precept into practice, by seeking Miss Jameson at once. He found her in the study, and found her sleeping. She awoke with a confused start, but Mr. Gervoise smiled blandly and replied,

"There is nothing like sleep, Miss Jameson. You know what Shakspeare says. Ah! well, never mind, I have forgotten it. Besides, I come upon business."

He drew a chair near hers, and, looking confidential and amiable, he resumed:

"What about the rule of love? Does Beatrice learn a little?"

"Yes, sir, a little."

"I am satisfied. What does she want with superfluous knowledge? It would be cruel to urge her too much—positively cruel! And now to the rule

of love let us add the scheme of observation. You must know, Miss Jameson, that education is my hobby. I have written a treatise upon it, which I must read to you some day. What day shall it be, Miss Jameson?"

"Any day, I am sure, sir."

"No, but please mention a day."

"Will to-morrow do?"

"Why, no, not to-morrow, I have leases to look at; but say after to-morrow, at two o'clock. Well, then, Miss Jameson, we must have observation; you must observe Beatrice from morning till night, and from night till morning."

"And act on my observations," eagerly put in Miss Jameson. "I understand."

"Ah! but you see it is *my* method you are applying; I think you had better report to me, and then I shall be able to guide you."

Miss Jameson turned red and was silent.

"Miss Jameson," asked Mr. Gervoise, with suave austerity, "may I request you to favour me with a reply."

"I am afraid, sir."

"You are afraid, madam! What do you mean by that?"

Mr. Gervoise's courtesy had all vanished. He spoke in a loud, sharp, high voice, angry and insolent; a voice that told Miss Jameson of instant and

disgraceful dismissal. The eighty pounds a-year, the comforts of Carnoosie, and dear delicate Anna, who depended upon her for support, rushed at once to Miss Jameson's mind. She gave Mr. Gervoise a frightened look, and said hurriedly,

"I mean, sir, that I am afraid the task is not an easy one with Beatrice; she is a quick child, and would detect—" Here Miss Jameson paused, at a loss for the right word.

"Observation," blandly suggested Mr. Gervoise.

"Observation, as you say. She would detect observation at once."

"Well, Miss Jameson, you must be careful—you must be careful, ma'am; but it must be done."

Miss Jameson sighed and looked piteous, but Mr. Gervoise had too much principle to relent or allow her to escape.

He looked at her fixedly, and said again,

"It must be done, Miss Jameson."

"Very well, sir," she replied, submissively. "As you please."

"Just so; and now, Miss Jameson, allow me a question. You have been some weeks in the house. I can see in your face that you are of a strongly observant turn; your opportunities, too, have been numerous. What do the members of this household say of me?"

Mr. Gervoise bent to hear Miss Jameson's reply. She was confounded and startled at the question. Several unpleasant remarks which she had overheard rushed to her mind, but she could not repeat them, it would affront Mr. Gervoise.

"I am not sensitive," he said blandly. "Speak without fear, Miss Jameson. Besides, I am not too old to learn, and improve myself."

Although she was a governess, and had been one for twenty years, Miss Jameson was not a clear-headed person. She was apt to confuse many things : she was clear about nothing, least of all about her own motives. Though sluggish and dull, she was so far the creature of impulse that reasoning had nothing to do with her actions.

Mr. Gervoise's question did not suggest to her that to repeat speeches not intended to be repeated is something very like treason. Miss Jameson did not take that view of the subject. She only felt vaguely that she must answer, that she must tell the truth ; and behind these two motives for sincerity she did not see or wish to see a third—her cold but very positive dislike to Mrs. Scot. She became quite lively, and said with an eagerness that gave Mr. Gervoise the clue to her nature,

"Well, Mr. Gervoise, since you will know the truth, I must tell it to you. Mrs. Scot's language has not been respectful."

"Tell me all, Miss Jameson—I am not sensitive."

"Well, sir, she said you wheedled—I beg your pardon——"

"Go on, Miss Jameson."

"The late Mr. Carnoosie."

Mr. Gervoise smiled.

"Ay, just as she said, Miss Jameson, that you beat Beatrice."

"I beat Beatrice!" gasped Miss Jameson.

"I mean slapping. Do not agitate yourself, I do not believe a word of it; but to be frank, I cannot part with Mrs. Scot, we must bear with her.

"I never laid a finger on Miss Gordon!" cried Miss Jameson, on the brink of tears. "I never even pushed or shook her—never!"

"Let us drop the subject—only a little observation in that quarter would render me an invaluable service. Good evening, Miss Jameson; I think I hear John, and he is looking for me. Good evening. You look quite lovely to-night, Miss Jameson."

With which polite speech Mr. Gervoise took his leave and found John on the staircase.

"Thank you, John," he said, taking the key from him. "I am glad to see you looking so well, it is quite remarkable."

Perhaps it was, for John had rather a surly look. He had been Mr. Carnoosie's favourite, and resented that gentleman's death as a personal injury.

"I hope everything has been smooth and pleasant," airily continued Mr. Gervoise.

This was an exasperating question, for between John and Mrs. Scot there was an old feud, which had broken out anew within the last week. So John's reply to Mr. Gervoise's kind inquiry was that Mrs. Scot had been as pleasant as vinegar.

"Dear me, I must put a stop to that," said Mr. Gervoise gravely; "you must tell me more. Come this way, John."

When Mrs. Scot gave Beatrice the keys of the Carnoosie rooms, she omitted one concerning which she had received strict injunctions from Mr. Gervoise. This key was that of a gallery containing a small but splendid collection of pictures which had been made by the late Mr. Carnoosie. Mr. Gervoise adored fine pictures, and this gallery where they reigned in costly solitude was the great charm of Carnoosie in his eyes.

He now entered it, followed by John, and he could not conceal his pleasure. Even in that fading twilight he saw them all, his darlings and his treasures—Beatrice's by law, his by enjoyment. There was his luscious Rubens, with the warm rich

blood flowing beneath the delicate skin, and mantling in the clear cheek. This was his Murillo, simple, noble, and tender. There were his Rembrandts, with the transparent darkness of his vast rooms and winding staircases. There were his exquisite Dutch masters, refined and homely, painting common things with divine art. Oh! for a Raffaele, for a Vinci! But these costly masters had probably been beyond the reach of the late Mr. Carnoosie of Carnoosie, and Mr. Gervoise sighed to remember that he should never enjoy and possess them. And the dearer they were, the better he liked them, for he had the true spirit of covetousness—he liked fine pictures for their value as well as for their beauty. He gave those before him a fond look, and turning to John, he bade him speak.

“I can look and listen, you know. So pray go on.”

And John did go on, grumbling in his desultory fashion, whilst Mr. Gervoise looked at the sixty pictures. Suddenly he stopped, amazed and doubtful.

“John, this is monstrous!” he said; “I cannot believe that Mrs. Scot hates her young mistress. Why should she, John?”

“Why, sir, Mrs. Scot has a curious way of puffing out her cheeks and blowing when she is dusting and cleaning, and she caught Miss Beatrice

mimicking her behind her back, and so she hates her."

"John, you are a keen observer. Of course *you* like your young mistress?"

"Not as if she were a real Carnoosie," replied John bluntly; "but I will do my duty by her."

"Just so. As to Mrs. Scot, I must give her a talking."

"She wants one, sir."

"I fear she does; but what does she say about me, John?"

"Nothing that I know of, sir; besides, I am no tell-tale."

Mr. Gervoise stepped back, and his glasses shone admiringly on John.

"I like you for that," he said. "You are an outspoken, manly Englishman. I like you, but I must give Mrs. Scot a talking. Good evening, John."

John went, chuckling with grim satisfaction; and Mr. Gervoise remained alone, looking at the pictures, and sighing over the missing Raffaella until seven struck. Mr. Gervoise then went forth to partake of that little strengthening repast which he had ordered that he might prepare himself for the exertion of writing those thirteen letters which were to keep up and improve his extensive connection, for Beatrice's benefit.

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE days exactly after the return of Mr. Gervoise to Carnoosie, Mr. Raby made his appearance there. He came by appointment; surprise did not blend therefore with Mr. Gervoise's pleasure. Of that pleasure we cannot doubt, Mr. Gervoise expressed it too loudly.

"How well you do look!" he said, as he received Mr. Raby at the head of the steps which led to the house; "and how I have been longing for you! Only an hour ago I was saying to Gilbert, 'I am longing for Mr. Raby.'"

Mr. Gervoise turned to his son, who stood by him with Beatrice; but instead of confirming this affectionate speech, Gilbert reddened and walked away.

"A shy lad," said Mr. Gervoise, smiling, and showing all his teeth, "a shy lad. Let us go in here, if you please."

He showed his guest into the library, and

closing the door, said anxiously: "What news?"

"I should have known better than let Mr. Carnosie's will bind me," groaned Mr. Raby. "Doctor Jones warned me, but I would have my way. Serve me right!"

"My dear sir," affectionately said Mr. Gervoise, "why take all this trouble? If you are delicate *I* am strong; leave everything to me, *I* can bear it."

Mr. Gervoise spoke in all sincerity. Mr. Raby hated the trust, and Mr. Gervoise the co-trustee. Mr. Raby had undertaken it out of regard to the dead, and Mr. Gervoise out of affection to the living. Both had yielded to necessity, and both had given her a reluctant assent.

But though Mr. Raby hated his task, though he thought Beatrice's affairs in safe hands, though he knew this fatal trust would shorten his days, he would not sign a scrap of paper without first looking over it; he would grow dizzy over accounts, and fall asleep over explanations. In short, though he had given no trouble as yet, there was no knowing when he would do so; and Mr. Gervoise, who was of a mistrustful nature, was on his guard. "He is like a cat," thought Beatrice's guardian. "He is fast asleep, his eyes are shut, he is nodding, you think yourself safe, and lo and behold you, he springs, he is upon you!"

This graphic image was ever before Mr. Gervoise's mental vision when Mr. Raby was by, and therefore was it with the tenderest hesitation that he proffered his services.

"No, thank you," sighed Mr. Raby; "besides, you can't help me with this Mortimer. You are too much in it."

"I!"

"Yes. He says he'll attack the will; that Mr. Carnoosie would never have left his money to poor Gordon if he had known he had turned Papist —"

"Mr. Carnoosie," interrupted Mr. Gervoise solemnly, "is in another and a better world, and these questions, these differences, do not trouble him now."

Mr. Raby looked puzzled.

"Well," but he said at length, "what religion is Beatrice of?"

"Mr. Raby, a child is of no religion."

"Well, but what religion are you of?" persisted Mr. Raby, not much enlightened.

"I am of the religion of the good all the world over," modestly replied Mr. Gervoise.

Mr. Raby felt rather more perplexed than before. The late Richard Gordon had left the Scotch Episcopal Church, for the older Church which Scotland obeyed before the Reformation, a year before

his death. His wife had declined joining him ; but had raised no serious opposition to his taking away Beatrice. Not trusting much either her judgment or her word, however, Mr. Gordon had appointed Mr. Gervoise his child's guardian, for the express purpose of securing her religious instruction. Mr. Gervoise, we know, was a most anxious and tender guardian ; but the child was so young that he thought it premature to take so much trouble about her religion, so he let her eternal welfare rest for a while, and cultivated her temporal interests with assiduous care. By a lucky chance Mr. Gordon died convinced that Mr. Gervoise was a pious Catholic ; and Mr. Carnoosie went to the grave with the certainty that Mr. Gervoise was a strict Protestant. Mr. Raby, however, as we see, found it rather more difficult to get any precise information on that head ; and not being one of these sharp, clear-headed men who will thrust a question upon you until it has been answered, he let the religious question stand, and went back to the Mortimer business. Mr. Mortimer, after accepting the will, had suddenly shown an inclination to dispute it. He contended that it had been obtained by undue influence, and that Mr. Gervoise had purposely kept the late Mr. Carnoosie in ignorance of Mr. Gordon's death, and of Beatrice's sex and religion. He had not yet taken law proceedings, but he threatened to do so.

"He will do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Gervoise after hearing Mr. Raby. "In the first place, because he has no money; in the second, because he would not be the gainer. Set the will aside, and the property goes by law to another minor, who on becoming of age may dispose of it; whereas by the will Mr. Mortimer has a chance, the next to Beatrice, I believe. Mr. Raby, he will not do it."

"Yes, but he will worry me," said Mr. Raby. "Mr. Carnoosie was my trustee, but he had not all this worry. I ought to have declined—I know I ought."

The dinner-bell put an end to Mr. Raby's lament.

The gentlemen joined Mrs. Gervoise in the neighbouring apartment, and the meal began.

"And how do you think our Beatrice is looking?" confidentially asked Mr. Gervoise.

A delicious *Julienne* absorbed Mr. Raby's attention, for he replied in a breath—

"Oh! very well indeed. What a capital cook you have got!"

"Yes, *Panel* is not amiss. We want him for Beatrice—a delicate child, Mr. Raby."

Mr. Raby paused, and seemed to ponder over Beatrice's case.

"I wonder if she is really delicate," he thought;

"perhaps, then, she will die young, poor little thing, and I shall be rid of the trust. But then there would be such a set of accounts with that Mortimer. It is quite horrid to think of!" And in his consternation at the vision of trouble following Beatrice's decease, poor Mr. Raby pushed away his plate.

"Pray let me help you to this *Salmis de Canne-tons*," said Mr. Gervoise.

"I can't," respondently replied Mr. Raby; "my appetite is all gone. Jones told me it would be so, but I would have my own way—it serves me right!"

Mr. Gervoise took no notice of Mr. Raby's exasperated and melancholy mood.

"You had better take some salmis," he kindly said; "I assure you nothing helps one through the troubles of life like substantial food. No dainties; no, good, substantial, strengthening food."

The *Salmis de Canne-tons* looked very tempting, and Mr. Raby allowed himself to be persuaded, and on the whole ate rather a good dinner. Towards the close of the meal, Beatrice's trustee began to waken to a sense of observation, in his dull way, and thought that he had never seen so depressed and melancholy-looking a wife as Mrs. Gervoise, nor so affectionate a husband as hers. He was so fond of his wife, and so careful of her

repose, mental and bodily, that he would scarcely let her talk, or stir, or eat. When she opened her lips, he was always entreating her to be calm, and when she asked to be helped to something on the table, he was sure it would disagree with her. Mrs. Gervoise, he informed Mr. Raby, when that lady had withdrawn, after receiving the intimation that she need not expect them in the drawing-room, a hint which made Mr. Raby groan, was very painfully delicate and excitable.

"You have no idea how restless it makes me," continued Mr. Gervoise; "I cannot sleep at night when I begin thinking of her."

"Just so. What capital wine this is!"

"Yes, I ordered it for Beatrice. She too is delicate. I do not know that we can keep her."

Mr. Raby put down his glass, and turned pale. Again the vision of Beatrice's death and its attendant evils passed before him. He felt excited and miserable, and summed up his feelings in an emphatic ejaculation:

"That damned trust!"

"No, no," soothingly said Mr. Gervoise, "we shall get on capitally. Take a little more wine."

"No," gloomily replied Mr. Raby; "wine gets up into my head. I could read and sign nothing if I drank another glass."

In vain Mr. Gervoise pressed him. There was

a stupid obstinacy in Mr. Raby, against which argument ever failed. So the business began, and matters went on pretty much as usual, and Mr. Raby was despondent and miserable, and when they had done for the evening, again said :

“It would worry him to death.”

Mr. Gervoise looked extremely grave.

“To tell you the truth, you do not look well. You have lost that cheerful and open aspect you had when you came.”

Mr. Raby groaned.

“My dear sir, let me relieve you. Let me read aloud, and you can sign.”

“No, you mean well, Mr. Gervoise, but people must not sign their name that way.”

“Well, perhaps not. Shall I cast up the accounts?”

“No, that would not be business-like. I must do it myself. I would not mind Jones. I must pay for it.”

“Well, take a little wine now, at least?”

“No, thank you. I must go at twelve, you know, and if we have more business——”

“Nonsense, take a glass.”

“I had rather not. You mean well, but I should not be happy in my mind to-night if I were not sure my head will be quite clear to-morrow.”

“Clear to-morrow,” thought Mr. Gervoise;

“when is your head clear, you obstinate donkey?”

But though Mr. Raby did to a certain degree live in a mental fog, he was, like the natives of foggy climates, accustomed to that atmosphere, and he could see his way through it. He went on a little more slowly than other people, but he did go on, and that is as much as the best of us can do.

That he did go on, Mr. Gervoise found the next morning; for whether Mr. Raby had slept badly, or had taken something that disagreed with him, he was in a most carping humour. He found fault with the matchless Panel's cookery, and hinted pretty broadly that, as it would only send Beatrice to an early grave, Monsieur Panel need not be kept on Beatrice's account, or at Beatrice's expense.

“Indeed, I don't see why we should not sell the pictures,” he said, in his grumbling fashion; “they are useless to Beatrice, and the late Mr. Carnoosie was dreadfully extravagant, and the ready money would pay off the mortgages.”

Sell the pictures! Mr. Gervoise's breath nearly forsook him at the suggestion; but he did not lose his presence of mind, and promptly replied,

“I am so much obliged to you for taking that matter of the pictures in hand. With *your* extensive connection, you will dispose of them easily. They are so valuable, that they are immensely

may be surmised from the grumbling ejaculation Mr. Raby uttered as the carriage drove away :

“A precious old rascal, I suspect !”

Precious Mr. Gervoise certainly was. The two hemispheres held nothing so valuable as his person, in his own opinion ; a rascal some people thought him, we are sorry to say ; but one point of Mr. Raby's proposition was certainly untenable : Mr. Gervoise was not old.

to the garden, still urging him to take the pictures in hand.

"But I undertook nothing of the kind," said Mr. Raby, stopping short in the shady path along which he was walking with his tormentor; "I did not even know there were pictures."

"Excuse me, my dear sir, excuse me," rejoined Mr. Gervoise, laying hold of his button hole; "you undertook a general, not a particular trust; the pictures were included, Mr. Raby—they were included. Don't you see?"

Mr. Raby's reply to this inquiry was the very pertinent question, whether Mr. Gervoise meant to worry him to death.

"Oh! no, no—not on any account," kindly answered Mr. Gervoise, "and indeed since the subject is so distasteful, we will drop it for the present, and renew it the next time you come."

Mr. Raby heard him in silence, and slowly treasuring up the admission, he firmly resolved not to visit Carnoosie in a hurry. They still stood in the path, for Mr. Raby was slow in his motions, as he was in all else; and when once he stood still, it was not easy to make him move. But Mr. Gervoise was the most patient of men in these matters. If Mr. Raby liked standing, why, he liked standing too; just as, if Mr. Raby had preferred sitting, sitting would have been the very thing for Mr.

Gervoise. So they stood, Mr. Gervoise enjoying the green shade around them, and the view of red old Carnoosie in the distance, and the glancing fountains and blue sky, with that pleasant sensuous enjoyment we all take in a fine morning and a beautiful spot. But bitterness filled Mr. Raby's phlegmatic heart as he looked around him, and remembered what a world of worry every object he saw had entailed, and would entail upon him still. He hated that red old Carnoosie, with all its windows and its chimney-stacks taunting him in the distance; he hated the fountains insolently dancing in the sun, and mocking him; and when a little childish scream was heard, and a little figure in a white frock, with a dark curly head, darted across the path, Mr. Raby felt that he hated Beatrice Gordon, the cause of all this woe. He looked at her with a gloomy fixedness which must have betrayed his feelings to Mr. Gervoise, if that gentleman had not been absorbed in the pleasant task of catching and then kissing his little step-daughter.

"Let me go!" she screamed; "let me go!" and as Mr. Gervoise did not let her go, she disrespectfully, but most deliberately, slapped his face. Mr. Gervoise smiled, but Beatrice uttered a piercing cry. "He has pinched me!" she screamed, in hot indignation, and no little pain; "oh! you bad man, I hope you will get ugly!"

As struggles and kicks accompanied Beatrice's cries and vindictive exclamation, Mr. Gervoise, still smiling and showing his sound white teeth, thought proper to put her down.

"Pinched you?" he said, amazed at the imputation; "what could make you think of such a thing, Beatrice?"

If Beatrice had not been choking with indignation and grief, she might have replied that a pair of fingers, strong and pitiless as steel, nipping the tender flesh covered by her little puffed sleeve, had made her think of it; as it was she only sobbed as if her heart would break.

Mr. Raby had looked on, an amazed and silent spectator of this rapid scene; but he now spoke with a warmth which Mr. Gervoise had not expected from the sluggish gentleman. Mr. Raby, looking sternly at him, asked point blank:

"Mr. Gervoise, why did you pinch the child?"

"My dear sir, I did not pinch her."

"You did," sobbed Beatrice, who felt a protector in Mr. Raby.

"Gilbert," blandly said Mr. Gervoise, appealing to his son, who had stood by all the time, having come up with Beatrice, "Gilbert, you saw all—did I pinch this little deceitful hypocrite?"

Mr. Gervoise spoke in a tone between compassion for Beatrice's wickedness, and virtuous

indignation for himself. Now it unfortunately happened that Gilbert had seen all, and could not answer this question according to Mr. Gervoise's wishes, and remained silent.

"Do not be afraid, lad, speak the truth," urged Mr. Gervoise, fixing his full blue eyes on his son ; "nothing like the truth, my boy."

Gilbert too had blue eyes, but eyes large, bright, clear, and nobly honest. They met his father's without a trace of fear in their look, and clearly and distinctly the lad said,

"You did pinch Beatrice."

Mr. Gervoise turned triumphantly towards Mr. Raby.

"There, sir, did you hear that ? That, sir, is education." And guessing that Mr. Raby might not understand his exact meaning, Mr. Gervoise kindly added, "I have taught that lad, sir, to love and practise truth beyond all else, and you hear him ; he will say the truth ; I did pinch Beatrice, sir, I did, to bring out this beautiful manifestation of my boy's veracity. What do you think of that, sir ?"

He looked hard at Mr. Raby, who did not answer ; but who in his dull slow way thought it all very odd, and relished it but little. But Mr. Gervoise was too kind to press him for a reply, so waving his hand at Gilbert and Beatrice, "Go

and play, children," he said, with the look of a stage-father blessing a young couple, "go and play," and gently pushing Mr. Raby, he made that gentleman walk on towards Carnoosie.

"I daresay you guess my intentions," said Mr. Gervoise, growing amiably confidential as they walked on together; "that boy is the idol of my heart—he is generous, brave, and true. I mean him, God willing, for our Beatrice."

Mr. Raby's mind was still too full of the treatment Beatrice had received to heed this communication. All he said was :

"Please not to pinch Beatrice any more."

"Not even to bring out Gilbert's veracity? Certainly not."

The promise satisfied Mr. Raby. He pulled out his watch, and sighed with relief to see how late it was. In vain Mr. Gervoise pressed him to stay, if only to see Gilbert and Beatrice together, a beautiful sight; Mr. Raby would go, and Mr. Gervoise saw him off. He saw him enter the Carnoosie carriage, and putting up the footstep with his own hands, bade him an affectionate farewell. But Mr. Raby had the slow, heavy, tenacious John Bull nature; with the smart, lively, volatile John Bull he had nothing in common, and certain impressions were not easily removed from his mind; what these were in regard to Mr. Gervoise

may be surmised from the grumbling ejaculation Mr. Raby uttered as the carriage drove away :

“ A precious old rascal, I suspect !”

Precious Mr. Gervoise certainly was. The two hemispheres held nothing so valuable as his person, in his own opinion ; a rascal some people thought him, we are sorry to say ; but one point of Mr. Raby’s proposition was certainly untenable : Mr. Gervoise was not old.

CHAPTER XIV.

As Mr. Gervoise and Mr. Raby walked away, Miss Jameson came up out of breath. Beatrice's cheeks were still covered with tears, and Gilbert looked disturbed. Miss Jameson arrived at a conclusion that did more credit to the readiness of her wit than to the soundness of her judgment.

"You have been fighting," she said.

"Don't be stupid, Miss Jameson," was Beatrice's irreverent reply; and taking Gilbert's hand, she walked away with great stateliness.

Poor Miss Jameson looked after them in sore perplexity. The rule of love having become the rule of observation, Beatrice had found that she must never be out of Miss Jameson's sight. The natural result followed—the child hated the governess whom she had not loved before.

Poor Miss Jameson! we say again, for she did not like the rule of observation; moreover, Mr. Gervoise had never allowed her a glimpse of his

manuscript essay, and had questioned her so slightly concerning the peculiarities of Beatrice's behaviour, that Miss Jameson concluded his great anxiety on that subject was over—rich people are so capricious—and began to take a little more liberty. Thus she forgot Beatrice, whilst she was in the last chapter of her second volume. The tale was charming, and reminded her so pleasantly of the one love chapter in the story of her youth !

Twenty years rolled away from Miss Jameson's life, as she sat and read within the green shadow of Beatrice's trees. That was just it! That handsome man of thirty-five coming to the father's house, and watching with calm but penetrating eyes the blushing daughter ; sitting by her gently attentive, though silent, brilliant and talkative with others, rather satirical too, with her ever amiable and kind. What a delicious dream ! What fond young hopes haunted the happy girl for a whole short and blissful year ! Then came the ending. The handsome man of thirty-five took a journey to London, and came back with a wife of thirty-two, to whom he had been engaged ten years--English fashion. Miss Jameson bore it very well. She had a low, nervous fever, and recovered it in time; lost a good deal of her hair, which had been "glorious," to use one of the handsome man of thirty-five's epithets ; and looking and feeling, too,

ten years older than before her illness, she went out as a governess, was tossed from hand to hand, according to the caprice or to the necessity of her employers; and survived the chief actors in her little drama, the handsome man of thirty-five included, to become an inmate of Mr. Gervoise's family, and there practise the rule of love and the rule of observation for the sum of eighty pounds a year, with which she supported herself and her delicate sister.

Now, the handsome man and the blushing girl, and the promises of the young love, were in the story she was reading. They were there, but with the fulfilment the loss of which had blighted Miss Jameson's life. The strong survive such blows, the weak never. Some terrible want there is evermore, of health, or love, or faith, or principle. It is not all who turn to God, like the men and women of old; more turn to the world, and worship it basely. Miss Jameson's health was perfect, and she could, being of a dove-like nature, have loved again with facility, had she found another mate; but the foundations of her moral world, which had never been of adamant, had been irremediably shaken. She had been deceived; and too gentle to feel much bitterness against the wronger, she was also too weak not to conclude that, since she had no right to complain, such things must be;

and if they were inevitable, so were some other crooked things; the weak must bend to the strong, or become their prey; and thus, little by little, servility entered a nature meant for a purer destiny, and bowed to ignoble aims a heart which might never have been great, but would have been good, had it not been profaned for a man's pastime.

And yet she did not like to watch Beatrice. She did not like observation, but she could not help herself, she thought; and Beatrice's little insolence acting as a stimulant, she now took heart once more, and hurried until she found the children.

They were enjoying one of their favourite haunts, and Miss Jameson sat down far enough not to disturb their enjoyment.

Beautiful and quiet was the spot they had chosen. A little river flowed in its deep and narrow bed, on to a mighty river of which it was tributary. The shade of old and broad spreading trees hung over it. The swift waters glided on in green waves, with here and there a broken patch of blue sky rippling with their motion. Beatrice sat on the grassy bank idle and happy. By her stood Gilbert, angling. The amusement suited his calm and meditative temper; and, alas! his was the age when no thoughts of mercy come between the heart and its promised pleasure. It was delightful, though

perfidious, to drop the line in the cool waters, and it was exquisite to expect the little silvery fish that was to come forth out of that deep and silent looking stream. Beatrice felt it too, for she sat watching with interest and curiosity in her dark face, and in her black eyes. There was a dreamy charm in the spot, and in the hour. The deep shade of the trees seemed made to lull one to sleep, the flowing waters of the stream to bear one along. Beatrice felt going away very fast, and with her went Gilbert, standing motionless by her side, and with both the rushes, grasses, and blue dragon-flies that made a little world of wonder and beauty around them. Very luxuriously happy felt Beatrice, till, suddenly growing tired of her happiness and waking from her dream, she plaintively called Gilbert to her side. And Gilbert did as Beatrice bade him; and Beatrice, plucking a long blade of grass, tickled his nose, to her own great amusement, and his no small discomfiture; and this pretty pastime ended in the despotic little mistress of Carnoosie saying abruptly:

“Gilbert, you will never leave Carnoosie!”

Gilbert was silent.

“You must not—you shan’t!” she cried.

“I do not want to go, Beatrice.”

“Yes, but promise!”

Before Gilbert could comply with the request,

Mr. Gervoise, stepping from behind a tree, appeared before them, followed by Miss Jameson.

"Well, children," he said gaily, "what are you doing?—making love?—our Carnoosie is a nice place for it."

"Carnoosie is mine," said Beatrice.

"Just so. Gilbert, come in with me. Stay, Beatrice, it is Gilbert I want."

Gilbert rose slowly, and leaving his rod and fishing-tackle in Beatrice's care, he followed his father.

"Don't be long," was Beatrice's last words; and Gilbert, looking back with a smile, replied,

"No longer than I can help, Beatrice."

These words probably roused some angry thoughts in Beatrice's bosom, for scarcely waiting for Mr. Gervoise to be out of hearing, she looked at Miss Jameson with flashing eyes, and said emphatically,

"I hate Mr. Gervoise!"

Miss Jameson looked frightened and piteous. She had just received a very severe talking from Mr. Gervoise for having left the children without what he was pleased to call the salutary restraint of her presence; and Beatrice's wrathful declaration, which she dared not repeat to her master, terrified her as a new calamity.

"Don't, my dear, don't talk so dreadfully," she did not venture to say wickedly. "Gilbert will soon come back."

"Yes, but I hate Mr. Gervoise," stoutly said Beatrice.

Miss Jameson sighed, but after all comforted herself with the reflection that it was impossible Mr. Gervoise should learn through a third person how very naughty Beatrice had been in her presence. "If I could only get on with both of them," thought Miss Jameson, "and keep my situation, I shall never get such another—never."

Poor Miss Jameson! If you could only run with the hare, and bark with the hound, how nice and pleasant it would be!

Mr. Gervoise took his son into one of the rooms on the ground-floor of the house, by far the pleasantest, and which he called his study. The servants were puzzled to know what he studied there, but Miss Jameson concluded he devoted it to the elaboration of his great work on education. If Mr. Gervoise was an author, however, he possessed the virtue of tidiness in a degree rarely allotted to his tribe. No books, no stray papers, no ink-stained tables, betrayed his calling. His study was a neat, pleasant and cheerful room, to which he had removed a few favourite pictures from the gallery, and which, without being luxuriously furnished, possessed every attribute of comfort.

Mr. Gervoise sat down in a capacious arm-

chair, and looking benevolently at Gilbert, who stood before him, he said, in a tender and feeling tone,

“My dear Gilbert, I need not tell you that to secure your permanent happiness is my most ardent wish ; to do so I must begin in your youth. I need not remind you that you are a Frenchman by birth, and that your future is in France, not in England, where you would ever be considered a foreigner. I have accordingly resolved to trust you once more to the care of your maternal uncle, who is pining for you. Your clothes are packed and ready, the carriage is waiting, and John shall accompany you to Newhaven and see you on board a Dieppe steamer. On landing, you will find your affectionate uncle ready to receive you.”

Perhaps Gilbert thought that his father took a strange way of showing his affection—that it was not much like paternal love to send him away to be reared by a brother-in-law for whom he cared little ; but he neither remonstrated nor remarked, he only asked, “Can I see Beatrice before I go, and bid her good-bye.”

“No, my dear boy. No, Beatrice is an excitable child, we must spare her. You must go at once, my dear Gilbert.”

Gilbert could scarcely hide his distress, but pride checked any outward manifestation of his feelings.

His lips quivered, his features worked, but he betrayed no other sign of emotion.

"My poor little Beatrice!" he sighed; and his thoughts flew back to the river by which he had left her sitting, and to the "Don't be long" with which she had seen him go.

"Beatrice will fret a while," said Mr. Gervoise, "but not long; your brother Antony is coming, and will comfort her, I have no doubt."

Some parents like to stimulate their children by jealousy; perhaps Mr. Gervoise belonged to this class, and mentioned his younger son, to give the elder one a useful prick; but Gilbert was generous, and he simply and truly replied:

"I hope he will. I do not want Beatrice to be unhappy."

"Of course not. And now, my dear boy, I really think it is time to go."

It was time, and nothing occurred to delay Gilbert's departure. Everything was ready, and he had not even to bid his stepmother good-bye. Mrs. Gervoise too was sensitive, and could not have borne the emotion of parting from Gilbert. So at least her husband kindly said.

Mr. Gervoise had concerted his scheme for the sudden and private departure of Gilbert, with tolerable care against all unpleasant contingencies; but there was one he was unable to avoid. In vain

had he left Beatrice in Miss Jameson's keeping, and given that lady private instructions to detain her where she was. Beatrice had a strong will, and Miss Jameson a weak one. To her commands the governess forgot to add force; she was stout, too, and could not overtake her pupil; once this young lady had begun running in the direction of Carnoosie, and precisely as Gilbert was leaving the house, Beatrice saw him; she saw John, too, and the carriage, and uttering a piercing cry, she sprang towards her friend. Before Mr. Gervoise could interfere, Beatrice was sobbing in the arms of his son.

"You must not go! you shall not go!" she cried.

"I must, Beatrice. My father wishes me to go."

She turned round and looked piteously at Mr. Gervoise.

"Don't let him go—don't!" she prayed.

"He must go, my love."

"He shan't!" she cried, stamping her foot.

"Yes, yes, he shall. Carnoosie is yours, but Gilbert is mine."

Beatrice felt the taunt, and so did Gilbert; he kissed her, then steadily entered the carriage, which, after driving Mr. Raby to the station, had come back for him. Beatrice stood in mute grief, looking after him with her large black eyes; but when she saw him enter the vehicle that was to

bear him away, and saw John climb up on the box, she clapped her hands in the wildness of her grief, and again sprang forward.

"Drive on!" cried Mr. Gervoise; and before Beatrice reached it, the carriage was rattling down the road, raising a cloud of dust on its way. Beatrice ran on a few steps, but even before Mr. Gervoise overtook her, she had felt the hopelessness of her attempt, and in her despair she had flung herself on the roadside; and there she lay, sobbing bitterly, and obstinately resisting all her guardian's coaxing entreaties to get up and go in. Mr. Gervoise, perceiving how fruitless were his efforts, suddenly changed his tone.

"Miss Gordon," he said, "if you do not return to the house of your own accord, I shall make you."

Beatrice looked up. She read his face. It was resolute and "wicked," as she said afterwards; and Beatrice had sense and pride enough to submit. She rose and walked to the house, her heart swelling with even more sorrow at Gilbert's departure than anger against his father. From one of the upper windows of the old brick mansion, she saw the pale, sad face of Mrs. Gervoise looking down at her with a wistful gaze. The poor lady had beheld Beatrice's passionate grief, and her heart had bled to feel that she could no longer help

her child. As Beatrice entered the house, Mr. Gervoise said to her :

“Don’t fret, my little love; my second son, Antony, is coming; he is about your own age, and you and he will be great friends—eh, Beatrice?”

Beatrice turned up her little flushed and angry face, and checking her tears to stare at Mr. Gervoise, she said :

“I hate Antony—I hate him!”

Mr. Gervoise laughed.

“Ve—ry naughty—ve—ry naughty!” he said.

“And I hate you,” added Beatrice, without raising her voice, and speaking in an even, steady tone, most unchildlike.

Mr. Gervoise looked thoughtful, and knit his brows. He did not want Beatrice Gordon, the mistress of Carnoosie, to hate him. He would rather have been loved by that young lady; for he knew this much of love, that it is a very convenient means of ruling the human heart; but as misfortune would have it that he could not inspire love, and even that he won hatred, Mr. Gervoise had frequently found it expedient to create fear. Beatrice, however, he found it very hard to conquer.

She was rich, and not a poor little nobody. People would be sure to interfere—Mr. Raby or Mr. Mortimer—if he carried matters with too

high a hand. So she must be ruled, or Mr. Gervoise would get into trouble. But how rule one whose whole being had from the first risen up against him, armed by the instinct of childhood? There was the difficulty. Mr. Gervoise had hoped to make Gilbert useful; but though Gilbert held over Beatrice the power which should have belonged to his father, he was too unmanagable himself to be available. This changed Mr. Gervoise's views. Gilbert was mute but obstinate, Beatrice outspoken and violent, and both were against him. These two enemies must not grow up side by side, supporting each other in their antagonism. Antony must take Gilbert's place, and Beatrice and Gilbert grow up apart, divided by land and sea, and foreign race and foreign speech.

Bitter and sore was Beatrice's heart the whole of that long and unhappy day. Mr. Gervoise had given strict orders that she should be left to herself. He did not allow his wife to leave her room, and he forbade Miss Jameson to say a word to the erring mistress of Carnoosie. His object was twofold: he wanted to punish Beatrice, and he also hoped to make the society of Antony more acceptable to her by its contrast with her previous isolation. But again Mr. Gervoise was doomed to disappointment and defeat. Instead of resenting the solitude in which she was left, Beatrice

evidently liked it. She sat and moped within the house the whole day long, heavy, listless, and unhappy. She would touch no dinner—not through stubbornness or pride, but because she was too full of her grief to feel hunger. Towards evening the sound of carriage wheels roused her. A wild and sudden hope made her think that Gilbert was coming back; she ran out of the house, and stood on the stone steps, looking eagerly; she saw the carriage, and John on the box, and a lad within.

“It is!—it is!” she cried.

The boy looked round. It was Gilbert’s brother Antony, whom Mr. Gervoise was welcoming with paternal tenderness. Beatrice walked back into the house, and went up to her room. She had not been there long, when a tap at the door preceded the entrance of Miss Jameson. She came in smiling, followed by Beatrice’s new companion.

The two brothers were alike; but theirs was an unpleasant, not a genial likeness. They had the same fair hair, the same blue eyes and fresh complexion; but Antony’s features, though far more delicate than Gilbert’s, were by no means so open and honest in meaning. There was something effeminate and cruel in this boy’s face, something which would have saddened a physiognomist and distressed a true believer. Was Antony born with perverted instinct, was he a free moral agent, or

one of those unhappy beings of whom we never know how far they follow their nature or suppress its nobler impulses? Yet he was handsome. There was beauty in his clear profile and short upper lip, and curved chin, and softness in his large blue eyes. He was a fair young tiger, with well-proportioned limbs, and a delicate skin finely stroked. And Antony had the softness too of the feline race; his father had tutored him below, briefly, but most significantly, and the boy came prepared to win Beatrice's heart.

"My dear, here is your young friend," gently said Miss Jameson.

"How do you do, Beatrice?" said Antony, and he held out a friendly hand.

"Go away!" indignantly replied Beatrice; "I want Gilbert."

The young tiger laughed, and showed teeth of pearl.

"Gilbert is in Normandy," he said; "such an ugly old place the Château is!"

This speech roused all Beatrice's wrath. She burst into angry sobs and tears, and was so violent and unamiable that Miss Jameson left the room, followed by Antony, who bestowed a fearful grimace on Beatrice, by way of parting salutation.

"This must be put a stop to," said Mr. Gervoise, frowning as he heard Miss Jameson's report; "I

have been lenient to folly and weakness. Beatrice must go to bed, Miss Jameson."

Miss Jameson agreed with Mr. Gervoise that Beatrice must go to bed, and she went back to Beatrice's room and saw the sentence put into execution forthwith. Beatrice offered no resistance. She submitted with quiet apathy, and heard Miss Jameson's lecture in scornful silence.

And now Beatrice is in her little white bed, alone, fretting. A pleasant room is that which belongs to the mistress of Carnoosie, large and lofty; but Beatrice does not appreciate the blessings of her lot, she only sees its dark aspect and its trials. Drearily she watches through the windows that face her bed the changes of the sky. The sun has set, the moon is rising. On the oaken floor shine two checked squares of a light both soft and pale. At another time Beatrice would like that blue sea on which the fair vessel of the moon is softly floating; she would like the squares on the floor, and watch them curiously and with inquisitive wonder, but now Beatrice only feels her grief. She does not seek to analyse it, she is too childish still, but she feels it all the more keenly that thought does not divert her from it.

"Gilbert! dear Gilbert!" such is the cry of her poor little aching heart. Suddenly, though very softly, the door of Beatrice's room opened. Beatrice

looked ; was it Miss Jameson's that white figure which stole softly across the moonlit floor ? No, it was not Miss Jameson's ; but Beatrice was not frightened, for she knew her mother, Mr. Gervoise's wife, who had come to comfort her child by stealth and in secret. She bent over and kissed her, and feeling the tears on her little feverish cheeks, she whispered fondly,

"Don't fret, my darling—don't !"

Beatrice's answer was to clasp her mother's neck and to sob piteously. Mrs. Gervoise seemed much frightened, as well as much moved.

"My dearest darling," she entreated fearfully, "try and be quiet. You might be heard. Try and be quiet, for my sake."

Beatrice felt her trembling, and understood her fear. It gave her grief a sudden check. She looked at her mother's pale face, which looked paler in the moonlight, and very earnestly she said,

"Don't be afraid, mamma. I shall take care of you."

Mrs. Gervoise clasped her hands.

"You cannot," she said, "you are but a little child. You cannot, Beatrice !"

"I will !" resolutely replied Beatrice, "don't be afraid, I will take care of you ; besides, Carnoosie is mine, you know."

Mrs. Gervoise did not answer. She swiftly

moved away, and left the room by one door, whilst Miss Jameson entered it by the other.

"With whom were you talking?" sharply asked that lady.

Beatrice's reply was more concise than polite.

"Miss Jameson," she said, "it is no use worrying me—good night."

Beatrice rolled herself in a ball in order to fall asleep, and Miss Jameson withdrew, much puzzled. Her first resolve was a wise one—she would try and please the mistress of Carnoosie. Her second determination was not very compatible with it—she would watch Beatrice, without seeming to do so.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Autumn sun is shining in the orchard of Carnoosie. The apple trees are bending to the earth their fruit-laden boughs, and Beatrice Gordon, now a stately young maiden, is gathering the ripe peaches from the wall, and daintily putting them one by one in the basket on her arm. Beatrice is altered; the child has passed into the girl, and the girl is both brilliant and pretty of aspect. The brown face is now of a delicate olive hue, with a bloom of twenty springs upon it. The dark eyes shine with a deeper light from beneath the rim of the round straw hat, and the fine Italian features have the seriousness ever ready to break out into mirth of Beatrice's Italian kin. Her long dark curls, which she has kept in spite of the prevailing fashion, give her mobile face something more changeful still. Just now Beatrice looks neither grave nor gay. She seems intent on her peaches—she seems, but is not. She knows that Miss Jameson is observing at a distance, but she does not care.

These two have not got on very well together. The rule of observation has not been more successful than the rule of love, and it has had this drawback, that Beatrice detected it, and despised her governess. Indeed, Miss Jameson's post was no sinecure, for Mr. Gervoise's manner having been such as to suggest to Mrs. Gervoise that if she were to die this lady might succeed her, she had shown a small, spiteful jealousy, which, united to Beatrice's cool contempt, had made Miss Jameson's position rather an unpleasant one. Then Beatrice would not learn; with the subtle perversity of childhood she had found out the weak point of Miss Jameson's knowledge—botany. In astronomy Miss Jameson was secure, she could call every star by its name, and tell you its exact breadth and depth; but the green covering which nature throws over this brown earth of ours she trod on in ignorant unconsciousness of its uses and mysteries. When Beatrice discovered this, she threw up her books, said Mr. Ray, Gilbert's tutor, knew botany, and that she would ask Mr. Raby to get her Mr. Ray. Mr. Raby had no power to interfere, but Mr. Gervoise both hated and feared him. Moreover, he asked no better than please Beatrice by spending her money for her; so Miss Jameson kept her post for observation, no doubt, and Beatrice's education was virtually committed to Mr. Ray.

Happy were the hours Beatrice spent with him, acquiring knowledge both varied and deep. It was her halcyon time, and the first bright spot in Mr. Ray's sad life. Untimely scruples had forbidden him to take the living in the gift of his family, and for which he had been reared; and a mild irresolution, which was both the charm and the fault of his nature, would not let him leave the communion in which he was born. He remained in it, doubting and hesitating; living in a spiritual mist which made other sorrows heavier to bear. His friends disowned him, the girl whom he loved married another, one wiser in his generation, who gratefully received the living Mr. Ray had declined. Very meekly he bore all this. He came to Carnoosie, settled there, and lived by teaching, until the death of an elder brother gave him a handsome competency, and the company of a favourite sister.

To this shy, solitary man a pupil like Beatrice, bright, clever, lively, and ambitious to learn, was a Godsend. An affection—paternal in its innocence—lover-like in its tenderness—sprang in his heart. He taught her all he knew, and especially did he teach her literature, ancient and modern.

"Literature," he often said to her, "is the fairest product of man's thought. Science and art are but one-sided conceptions, noble in their way, but

narrow. Literature is all in all to such as know how to sound its depths."

Into these depths he did his best to lead Beatrice. Ah! what pleasant and flowery paths did Mr. Ray reveal to the eager girl in the fair fields of classic love! All the bees of Hymettus yielded their sweetness at his call. From that calm and noble world of ancient song he led her gently into the less peaceful but more subtle and penetrating regions of the early poets, Italian and English. With these both Mr. Ray and Beatrice lingered long: Petrarch, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, a goodly company. When these princes and lords of poetry were exhausted, Mr. Ray taught Beatrice to appreciate the gentle minor spirits who in every age shine with mild star-like radiance near the great planets. And thus step by step he led her down to our own days, culling with careful hand all the blossoms, and avoiding all the dangerous snares and pitfalls in the way.

Wonder not that these lessons, which were very sweet to Mr. Ray, were heaven to Beatrice. Her life was but a sad one. Mr. Gervoise's power was both cruel and complete, and it had been exercised unsparingly. The haughty young mistress of Carnoosie had not been ill-used, her health had been attended to, she had had a governess, Mr. Ray,

and expensive masters from London, to make her accomplished as well as learned. She had a maid, too, and rich dresses and jewels—on all of which Mr. Gervoise had realized handsome profits, as was but fair; but, for all that, Beatrice had not been happy, and her very heart and soul had groaned beneath the yoke.

Beatrice was sociable, and she lived in the deepest solitude. There was a Roman who wished for a glass house, but Mr. Gervoise only sighed to think how thin and transparent were brick and mortar. No one ever came to Carnoosie, and its inmates rarely left it. This unnatural seclusion influenced Beatrice's whole character. It gave premature concentration to a mind naturally vigorous, and severity to a temper which, though impetuous, was also fond. Her life was a battle, in which, though ever conquered, she never confessed herself defeated, and what life was this for a handsome girl, a rich one, too, of twenty?

Wonder, not therefore, that Beatrice, reared near her sickly mother, and the sport-loving Antony, surrounded by servants who were also spies, bitterly conscious of her wrongs, though proudly silent under them, found exquisite solace in Mr. Ray's lessons and companionship.

There are many issues to Carnoosie, and if you leave it as Beatrice did, by that lower orchard

door, you enter a pleasant little village, hamlet, rather, with a straggling street, and low houses and blooming gardens in front of them, and children rather more rosy than the flowers meeting you at every corner. A church all ivy, a little grassy churchyard with many hillocks and few stones, a shining pond where geese and ducks are cackling, and a small green common, on which a meditative donkey is grazing, complete the picture, lit by bright gleams of sunshine, and set off by deep masses of shade and foliage in the background.

Many were the nods Beatrice gave, and many were the curtsies she received as she walked along with her basket on her arm, and her round straw hat shading her handsome dark face. Beatrice's allowance of pocket money was not large, but little of it was there that did not go to the inmates of those cottages—and they knew it well. They loved her, and they blessed her, and this bond of love was the only bond between them.

Beatrice's estate lay at the other end of Carnoosie, and her tenants were farmers, not cottagers.

This hamlet, a small possession, belonged to Antony Gervoise. It had been detached from the estate in favour of a second son of the Carnoosies a hundred years before, and from that second son, through his mother, Antony was descended. This

was his tie of kindred with Beatrice, and the origin of Mr. Gervoise's acquaintance with Mr. Carnoosie. But, for once, Beatrice did not visit any of her humble friends. She went on until she had left the last house behind her. A little farther she found a pretty cottage surrounded by green fields. This was Mr. Ray's house, the haven in which he had at length found rest.

There was wisdom and truth in the dreams of our ancestors. We all have a bit of the peasant nature in us, and from the days of the Latin poet downwards, we have envied the tillers of ancestral acres, and coveted our share of mother earth. Whatever form the dream may take, pastoral or agricultural, it is there. Damon and Phyllis were but the myths of that unfulfilled desire. For evermore man has longed to sit down by babbling streams and listen to birds that never sang in cages. Give him sheep to watch idly in a landscape as unreally sweet as any Claude ever painted; give him ancient fields, or virgin prairies, or backwood demesnes to make fruitful according to the century he lives in, and in his dream at least he is content. Failing all these, give him the reality of a cottage near a quiet village, a cottage standing alone with plenty of wide green around it; a garden where the gooseberry bush will thrive next the rose; give him rabbits, and a few hens, and new laid

eggs, and he rejoices in a country life, and feels king of his little world.

For this is the great secret, after all. Who possesses land in a city? Your house may be your own, but you generally pay ground rent. Then you have neighbours troublesome and impertinent; that isolated sovereignty which man dreams of when he flies to the country, is not to be had in a town for love or money. Kings and queens pine for it in vain. Is there not always a jealous public to grudge them their garden walks, or a loving public anxious to share them? But what the city, with all its delights, cannot give even to the great and few, the country bestows freely on the humble and the many. A few fields separate you from mankind, and give you the sense of happy independence, for which we long in youth, and towards which we turn in age.

Such a cottage was Mr. Ray's. It had a large garden, an outhouse, a few fields, a poplar avenue, a paddock, and a dairy. Here, for the last six months, had resided Beatrice's teacher and friend. Tardy prosperity had given these quiet enjoyments to his sad life, over which they now shone with the pale glow of a calm autumn evening. His other pupils he had given up, but he had kept Beatrice; she was not a pupil, but the apple of his eye. Daily they spent in the old library of Carnoosie a happy

hour, which often lengthened into three. This day, however, Beatrice came to him, for he was unwell, and could not go out.

Miss Ray was in the garden gathering flowers. She looked up on hearing Beatrice open the gate, and her face brightened into a smile, and greeted her with a simple warmth which was the basis of her character. Guilelessness was written in Miss Ray's face, though it was a face of fifty-five, and guileless Miss Ray was to the heart's core. Faith in God and man was her prevailing and gentle attribute. Do not tell Miss Ray of this world's wickedness; she believes in it, of course, for she reads her Bible and the newspaper, but she has never seen it. She knows that there have been fearful sinners, and that there are murderers who move about with the face and aspect of other men; but ask Miss Ray for no more than that abstract knowledge. Such as it is, it has often made her unhappy, and given her sleepless nights.

"How is Mr. Ray?" asked Beatrice.

"Better, my dear; and how is dear Mr. Gervoise? he looked poorly yesterday."

Beatrice winced to hear dear Mr. Gervoise's name; habit could not reconcile her to the strange blindness of both Mr. and Miss Ray concerning Mr. Gervoise's real character. True, he had done much to conciliate their good will, and secure their

esteem ; but still how could they read him so ill ?

She answered coldly :

“Mr. Gervoise is well, thank you. And where is Mr. Ray ? I have brought him some peaches.”

“How kind of Mr. Gervoise,” said Miss Ray, with a bright smile ; “he said yesterday he would send my dear brother some.”

Beatrice was silent. Mr. Gervoise had probably heard her questioning the gardener concerning the ripeness of the peaches, and thus coolly attributed to himself the merit of a gift he grudged in his heart, but dared not prevent.

“My dear brother will be so glad to see you,” continued Miss Ray, preceding Beatrice along the path that led to the house ; “he is so low.”

“He has no cause, has he ?” asked Beatrice.

“The old cause, my dear,” sighed Miss Ray. “He never got over that disappointment about Miss Jones, and never will. There are sorrows men never do get over, my dear.”

Ah ! but they do, Miss Ray, and so do women ; but never mind—such is your simple faith. Keep it fast, and hold it dear.

Beatrice’s scepticism did not reach matters of which she knew nothing, so she nodded sagaciously, and thought how lovely Miss Jones must have been. She could not help saying as much.

"Oh dear, no!" replied Miss Ray; "she was rather plain, in my opinion."

"But very fascinating, I suppose?"

"Not to most people. She was quiet."

"Not brilliant and intellectual?"

"Oh! not at all."

"Well, but, Miss Ray, what could charm him so?"

"My dear—he loved her; I really can tell you no more."

Love was not one of those abstract sciences in which Mr. Ray instructed Beatrice, but she thought, as she followed Miss Ray in the cottage, what a wonderful and perplexing thing this love must be, which, without beauty, fascination, or intellect, could give a life-long sorrow to Mr. Ray!

Whatever Miss Ray might say, and Beatrice fancy, Mr. Ray was not thinking of Miss Jones. The shadow of that sorrow still hung over his life, but the sorrow itself was buried and dead, to rise no more; not even on the great judgment day. He sat near the parlour window reading; and that quiet room, prettily but simply furnished, the table covered with books, the open window framing a grand shining landscape, and the meditative figure of the student, with his grey hair falling in heavy waves around his pale and emaciated face, struck Beatrice's artist eye as a calm but exquisite picture.

"Mr. Ray," she cried, breathlessly, "I must sketch you some day. You look beautiful so, and so does the room."

"Mr. Ray is beautiful!" fondly said Miss Ray; "and the room is a pretty room," she added, simply.

Mr. Ray smiled, and holding out his hand, he drew Beatrice towards him.

"What have you been doing, my dear?" he asked, tenderly.

Beatrice did not answer; her countenance grew clouded; she saw Miss Jameson coming in at the garden-gate, and she could scarcely repress her vexation. But she had made it an early rule to complain of her lot to none, and if Mr. Ray was her friend, he was not so in the confidential meaning of the word. He knew nothing, and nothing did Beatrice tell him. We do not mean to say, however, that he did not know that Miss Jameson was distasteful to her pupil, and that he was himself rather obnoxious to that lady; but into the causes of Beatrice's dislike he had never searched, and Miss Jameson's he forgave. It was professional, and very natural jealousy, and if she now followed so closely on Beatrice's steps, it was still that natural and pardonable infirmity which brought her. His welcome was, therefore, kind and courteous, and Miss Jameson, casting a furtive

and frightened look at Beatrice, who stood austere and grave, said, hurriedly :

“And how are you, Mr. Ray ? I was so sorry to hear that you were unwell. Mr. Gervoise told me of it this morning. It gave me quite a turn. I am so nervous since I lost my dear sister.”

And genuine tears stood in Miss Jameson’s dim eyes, for the delicate sister whom she had supported so long, at the cost even of honour and truth, had been dead six months.

“And how is dear Mr. Gervoise ?” tenderly asked Miss Ray. “I was saying to Miss Gordon that he looked but poorly.”

“He is poorly,” said Miss Jameson. “His mind is too much for him, and his heart too, Miss Ray.”

“It is,” cried Miss Ray ; “he shed tears when I told him yesterday about these poor Wilkins.”

“Ay, and he shed nothing else !” thought Beatrice, indignant, though silent.

“Mr. Gervoise is a most humane man,” mildly said Mr. Ray, “and a man of fine intellect,” he added, gravely.

These were the things which Beatrice could scarcely bear. But Mr. Gervoise had fascinated Miss Ray by seeming to enter heart and soul into all her charitable plans ; and he had won Mr. Ray over by listening with reverent attention to one of

Mr. Ray's hobbies, the beneficial effect of literature in education as compared to science. Thanks to these facile means, Mr. Gervoise kept them both in his hand, and knew as exactly what Beatrice felt, thought, and said, as either Mr. Ray and his sister. They were quite as useful in their way as Mrs. Scot and Miss Jameson.

"What I like in Mr. Gervoise," resumed Miss Ray, "is the beautiful simplicity of his nature."

"Beautiful, indeed," said Miss Jameson, and she turned up her eyes at Mr. Gervoise's artlessness.

Beatrice could bear no more.

"Mr. Ray," she said, "can I go into the library and get your Dante, I find there is a page missing in mine?"

"I shall get it for you," said Mr. Ray, rising.

He went into the next room; Beatrice followed him in, and shut the door, laughing. That was what she wanted, to be alone with Mr. Ray. He took down Dante, and Beatrice had a dozen questions to put, which Mr. Ray was willing to answer. They sat down with the open volume, a fine quarto, and Mr. Ray's grey beard and Beatrice's dark curls soon bent over the page. Miss Jameson and Miss Ray were walking in the garden, talking cheerfully together, and within sight and hearing, but Beatrice did not care. The whole world might look and listen, so she had her dear master

to herself, and was not compelled to stand and hear Mr. Gervoise's hated praises. And thus an hour passed, until at length Miss Jameson got tired and ashamed, and took her leave. Beatrice saw her go, and looked after her with a curling lip and a mocking eye.

"Beatrice," said Mr. Ray's mild and reproving voice.

He was looking at her with gentle admonition. Beatrice's lids fell. We are afraid that sincere repentance was far from her heart, but she loved him too much to indulge in open rebellion, and she sighed to think how he, too, was deceived.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILST Beatrice is reading Dante with Mr. Ray, Mr. Gervoise is enjoying Beatrice's pictures. The cool north light falls steady and clear on the sixty paintings in the gallery at Carnoosie. The mellow Cuyp, the golden Claude, the deep and dark Rembrandt, the Flemish ladies, clothed in satin, and playing on their lutes to cavaliers in velvet and lace, their grey hats with red feathers lying on a table, the Dutch housewives cleaning vegetables in their old Dutch windows, the soldiers playing at cards and cheating in the tavern ; all are there, soft, distinct, and clear. Enthroned in the centre is Murillo's virgin, a sweet and gracious image. No longer human is that pure flesh. It has passed through the grave and entered the world of immortal life. Eternity is beaming from those radiant eyes, and never more shall that happy smile know sorrow. The battle is over and won, the divine mother has found her divine son, the thresholds of

Heaven are passed, and welcomed by saints and angels, she sits above, as Gabriel found her, praying in the little house in Nazareth, "full of grace."

"A dangerous neighbour that Murillo," thinks Mr. Gervoise, who has been looking, and he walks on.

On him, too, falls the clear north light—an unpleasant picture. Ay, Murillo, the Murillo who paints Madonnas, is a dangerous neighbour here. More dangerous than to the sensual Rubens, or to the earthly Van Ostade. Time and life have worked hard at the living picture before us, and disease has helped them; the comely face and the handsome features which won Mr. Gervoise his three wives will never get him a fourth, should Mrs. Gervoise die.

Behold him now, red, bloated, and pimply. He does well to turn away from that pale and Heavenly lady throned in grace; it is a keen and cruel contrast, even though there is no eye to see it, for Mr. Gervoise and the pictures are alone.

They are still his darlings; still his eye wanders with delight on those relics of the genius and the hopes and feelings and dreams of vanished ages, which man agrees to prize so highly. A strange taste and a strange pleasure, if we think of it well. We are surrounded by reality, and we heed it not; images of the most homely scenes can throw us in-

to a fever of ecstasy, and the scenes themselves leave us cold. A cabbage painted by a Dutchman is divine; put it in a kitchen garden, with the morning dew of Heaven itself still glistening upon it, and we shall set its market value upon it, no more. Is the memory of some things better than those things themselves, or rather is man's conception of the meanest objects creative and divine in its effect upon man? Mr. Gervoise's thoughts took no such searching turn; but he knew that his was no unmixed joy. These pictures were not his, they were Beatrice's, and Beatrice would soon be twenty-one; and envy and regret mingled now, as ever, in his delight.

Moreover, Mr. Gervoise was alone, and though he was the most unsociable of men, he hated solitude; it may be that it inspired him with a sort of terror. Since he had settled in Carnoosie he had studiously shunned the paying and the receiving of all visits; but his own society was irksome to him, his wife's, a servant's, Beatrice's even, was preferable. Mrs. Scot's voice, which he now heard outside, suggested the relief he wanted to the burden of his own thoughts; he hastily opened the door and called out cheerfully—

“Mrs. Scot, this way if you please.”

The causes which made Mr. Gervoise's society irksome to himself, rendered it doubly so to those

around him. The very kitchen-maids dreaded the infliction. No condescension, no amiability, could efface the terrible fact, Mr. Gervoise was a bore ! But Mrs. Scot had not time to escape, so she obeyed the summons, and heard Mr. Gervoise asking her where he should hang up the new Ribeira he meant to purchase.

Mrs. Scot hated pictures. They had been the late Mr. Carnoosie's hobby, and she hated them with a vindictive hatred. Ribeira's Spanish name irritated her. Were not all the pictures foreigners, every one of them ? she might have answered sharply ; but it was a listener, not a speaker, Mr. Gervoise wanted, and he complacently resumed —

"This is a splendid Ribeira, Mrs. Scot, the finest in England. A Saint Sebastian ; it belonged to the Iron Duke, who got it from Spanish monks and gave it to a lady, who sold it to a picture-dealer. It is all but mine, and where shall I hang it up, Mrs. Scot ?"

"Mrs. Gervoise is a better judge than I am, sir," replied Mrs. Scot, glancing towards the window, through which Mr. Gervoise could see his wife walking on the terrace.

Mrs. Gervoise was a new listener, and her husband said quickly—

"Quite right, Mrs. Scot. Mrs. Gervoise has a very correct eye. Will you ask her to come up ?"

Mrs. Scot nodded in her stern way, and went down to the terrace where Mrs. Gervoise was slowly walking in the sun. Pale and wan was the poor lady now; habitual ill health had seized her for its own since her second marriage. To lie on a couch, with Beatrice sitting by her side, or to take a slow walk around the house on the sunny terrace, was Mrs. Gervoise's fate now. She turned round with a scared look on hearing Mrs. Scot's step, and listened to her message with evident trepidation, but she hastened to say,

"Oh, certainly!—I am going! Mr. Gervoise must not wait. Will you help me up-stairs, Mrs. Scot, if you please?"

Her tone in addressing the housekeeper was humble and timid; and Mrs. Scot, with very little relaxation of her stern mien, condescended to give the lady her arm, and took her up to the gallery without a word.

"Are you not coming in too, Mrs. Scot?" entreatingly asked Mrs. Gervoise, in the tone of one who dreaded a private interview with Mr. Gervoise.

"No, ma'am," was the short reply, "I must see to the china."

Mrs. Gervoise sighed, and entered the gallery. She did not shut the door behind her; and Mrs. Scot, whilst seeing to the china, as she called it,

could hear the conversation within. The Carnoosie china was to Mrs. Scot what the Carnoosie pictures were to her master. Amongst the elder Carnoosies' there had been one who had honoured Asia and the Indian Ocean with frequent visits. From these remote expeditions he had brought back strange treasures—carved Heathen idols of yellow ivory, with crossed legs, and triple faces, and many hands. These abode in a large japanned cabinet, on the outward shelves and cornices of which extended a small but costly collection of ancient china. This was Mrs. Scot's peculiar delight. She doted not merely on the delicately-transparent cups and saucers, but especially on two horrible and gigantic dragons, green and gold, which, being too large to stand on the shelves of the cabinet, were placed on the floor in front of it, like the grim keepers of some enchanted castle. A sort of maternal affection had Mrs. Scot conceived for this pair of monsters. Their broad, horny heads, their monster bodies, and scaly tails, were more to her than the Murillo to Mr. Gervoise, who hated the Carnoosie china as she hated the Carnoosie pictures, and had once told her he would give all that rubbish for a Ribeira. Mrs. Scot had treasured up the confession with stern resentment, and bestowed a double amount of her dislike on the Ribeira tribe from that day forth.

With tender care she now dusted her grim darlings, neither hearing nor minding the preliminary discourse which passed between Mr. Gervoise and his wife. A word that caught her ear made her pause and listen. Mr. Gervoise was saying :

"This Ribeira was my father's, as I told you. He purchased it in Holland, then parted with it to the man who has it now, but on the express condition that I should have the power of re-purchasing it. I really think I ought to buy it back. Beatrice would like it, I am sure."

"What is the subject?" asked Mrs. Gervoise's timid voice.

"Mary Magdalen doing penance in the desert. A lovely head!—it would please Beatrice. Try, my love, and ascertain if she would like it!"

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Gervoise's faint voice again; "I should like to sit down, Mr. Gervoise."

"Better walk, my dear—better walk. You want strength; take my arm. Let us walk up and down, and look at the pictures, my love."

Mrs. Scot stared at her china monsters, and nodding grimly, she thought :

"He would tell lies to himself in a wood. He thinks lies—he dreams lies! I never yet heard him tell the same story twice the same way. Give him a pin's head worth of truth, and he will spread

it into an ell. He lives upon lies—they are meat and drink, and sleep to him!”

We have all our own peculiar fault, which we yield to and cherish with paternal tenderness and peculiar vice, which we hate with cordial abhorrence. Mrs. Scot was vindictive; she had never forgiven Beatrice for making faces at her—on her death-bed she would not forgive her. She hated inanimate objects with the same vigour, and what she did not hate Mrs. Scot as a rule despised. Love, its gentleness, its warmth, and innocent fervour, were sealed mysteries to this woman’s heart. Yet, without a sort of integrity of her own, cruel and hard she was not. She could tell an untruth coolly and wickedly—for her revenge did not scorn this mode of action; but she hated a lie as a sort of meanness. Especially hateful to her was the small purposeless untruth.

“If he even meant something by it,” she soliloquised, with indignant virtue; “but, no—it is all for nothing, and no good. A foreigner, every bit of him—a dirty, lazy, lying foreigner, come to live upon us English! That’s what he is—Mr. Gervoise.”

With which flattering comment Mrs. Scot gave the Chinese monsters a last fond look and shut up the cabinet.

At the foot of the staircase Mrs. Scot met An-

tony Gervoise, now a very pretty young man, with a slight but by no means an effeminate figure. He nodded to her, and with his feline smile he said—

“How’s your cat, Mrs. Scot?”

Then, without waiting for her reply, he walked away laughing.

Mrs. Scot looked after him with her darkest look. If she hated Beatrice, she hated Antony ten times more, for only two months ago had this blue eyed young man cruelly waylaid and killed her large black cat, the only creature which Mrs. Scot cared for. But she smiled as she watched him taking the path that led to the orchard. She knew what he was seeking there, and Mrs. Scot nodded triumphantly as she thought of the reception he was going to get. Antony himself had painful doubts on the subject. “She’ll scratch my eyes out,” he thought, but then he remembered that to the attractions of his blue eyes and rosy cheeks a brown moustache was now added, and on this potent spell he relied. “She can’t resist that,” he thought, “she can’t, you know.” Nevertheless he paused when he saw her at a distance. Blunt though his perceptions were, he knew that Beatrice and he stood at the two extremities of the moral world. But why was it so? “It is all her perversity,” he thought, “only she’s so pretty.” So she was, and he stood and looked at her admiringly.

Antony had been plucked at the university ; but on returning to Carnoosie, shorn of some laurels, he had lost no time in gathering others in a pleasanter field.

There was some fine shooting about Carnoosie—shooting which was thrown away upon Beatrice. Mr. Gervoise committed his son to the care of the gamekeeper, and paternally took no more trouble about him. He had given him the opportunities of a first-rate education, and of a high connexion—he had given him the chance of a rich wife—he had given him the habit of manly sports ; a kind father could do no more.

His second son took very kindly to this teaching ; that portion especially which regarded Beatrice Gordon and the shooting did he affect ; and when he got tired of the one he promptly turned to the other. It happened to be Beatrice's turn now.

"She is thinking of something pleasant," he thought, watching her as she sat at the foot of a tree, "some new way of tormenting me, of course. Well, she does look tantalizingly pretty, that is all." And unable to resist the fascination which ever made him seek this charming tormentor, Antony suddenly came forward and familiarly sat down by Beatrice's side. Her nerves were well strung, she neither started nor showed any surprise, but she slowly turned towards the young man, and her

dark eyes shone on him with austere displeasure :

"I told you once for all that I wished to be alone in the orchard," said the mistress of Car-noosie.

"Shall I go?" asked Antony.

Submission always softened Beatrice, besides her original dislike of Antony had given way to a sort of contemptuous and compassionate liking. She, too, studied him with sad wonder, she read in him instincts of evil so deep and so dangerous that it pleased her to consider him as a being of another race than that of Adam—a cruel, perfidious and graceful specimen of the genus felis, who could no more help his perversity than the domestic cat, or the tiger of the jungle can help theirs.

"And yet I could tame him," thought Beatrice sometimes. And so she could; she could tame, but not conquer; subdue the outward wickedness, but never reach the inner heart.

"You need not go," she now said graciously enough. "What have you been doing whilst you were away—shooting?"

Antony nodded.

"I suppose you cannot make up your mind to read the book I lent you?"

"I read it through," promptly answered Antony.

Beatrice held up her finger.

"You are telling me an untruth," she said.

"Beatrice on my word of honour——"

"Do not," she interrupted, "you pain me."

And Antony saw with some surprise that her eyes were bright and dewy with tears.

"You pain me," she said again. "You are so unlike what Gilbert's brother should be. Oh! what a pity, my poor Antony, that you are what you are, what a mortal pity! You are young, you are handsome, you are well off, I believe, you could move in good society, act a noble part in the world, and all these blessings, so precious, so invaluable, are wasted! You have neither honour nor truth, nor wisdom. Your ignorance makes you unfit to be the companion of gentlemen, your tastes are lower than your groom's, for he rises to his master, and you sink to your servant. Antony, it is a mortal pity, and my heart aches for you."

There were some unflattering things in this speech, and Antony winced to hear them, but he was accustomed to bear a good deal of this sort of frankness from Beatrice; besides, she had said, "You are handsome!" and his mind was of the order to revel in such words when uttered by Beatrice's lips. His blue eyes overflowed with delight, his lips trembled with excitement, and

bending towards her with caressing grace, he said softly :

“Beatrice, I know I am all wrong, but, Beatrice, my father is to blame ! He is the most selfish of men. Beatrice, he would let me go to ruin rather than take the least trouble about me. So I let him look at his pictures, and enjoy his French cook—what does he care ?”

“Hush !” said Beatrice, “you should not speak so.”

“Beatrice, it is the truth, and you cannot deny it. Beatrice, believe me, I could become very different from what I am if you would take me in hand.”

Beatrice’s bright dark eyes laughed, but she did not answer. Antony continued :

“Beatrice, I would do anything to please you—try me !”

“How so ?” asked Beatrice, still laughing.

Antony stooped, took her hand, and kissed it with some passion.

“Beatrice,” he said, “I love you dearly; beyond anything and anyone else in this world !”

There was nothing in this confession to surprise Beatrice. She had known for a long time what Mr. Gervoise openly wished for, and what his son secretly desired ; she had not taken the trouble to check either father or son. She felt her own in

deed and thought, and feared nothing and no one. But though Antony's confession could not astonish Beatrice, it startled her slightly, for she was not prepared for it just then. She coloured a little, but neither attempted to rise nor to withdraw her hand from Antony's. That pity which was her strong and ruling feeling towards him, rose again within her.

"Poor Antony!" she said softly; "don't you know that can never be—never?"

"Why not, Beatrice?"

"Because it is against nature that there should be anything save abhorrence between us."

"Beatrice!"

"Yes, I know; and please not to kiss my hand any more. I know, Antony, you like me. So does the cat like the bird it is ready to spring on and devour. That is your way, Antony! I have seen you whip your dog—that is your way."

Tears rose to his eyes, tears of grief and shame. He dropped her hand, and almost flung it from him.

"Oh! Beatrice," he said, "you are too cruel!"

"Am I?"

"Yes. Have I not just told you that you could mould me to your own will, Beatrice?—indeed you could!" and turning round, he looked at her very tenderly, and, for once, sincerely.

Again Beatrice seemed much affected. Years of solitude and thought, and some suffering, had given her a depth and penetration beyond her age. She was young in her enjoyment of life, and old in her sense of its mysteries and sadness. Thought and reading and observation, keen, though limited, had supplied, with her, the place of experience. She knew Antony Gervoise thoroughly, better than he knew himself, and she knew that, unless through a miracle, there was little or no hope for him. That miracle she did not feel called upon to perform, but it saddened her inexpressibly to think that it could perhaps have been done, and that it never would be, and that Antony Gervoise would and must go down to perdition, and never find a helping hand on his way.

The young man was watching her closely. He saw her emotion, and though he did not think it all favourable to his suit, he felt a vague hope.

"Try me, Beatrice," he said, softly, "try me."

"Never in that way," she replied, with her firm, bright smile, "never, Mr. Antony Gervoise. I have already said it to you—we are not of the same kind, and we cannot mate. If I do marry, the man I choose must be beyond me, in my conception, at least, in all that is good, noble, and true. This you cannot be. I have infinite pity

for you, Antony, pity deeper than I can say, but that is all."

"You like me, Beatrice!"

"No. And if I do, do not rely upon it. That liking is nothing, and will lead to nothing."

Antony bit his lip, and frowned slightly.

"I tell you that you like me," he persisted.

But Beatrice would not be angered.

"Yes," she said, "I do. You are young, and you might be good. You are Gilbert's brother, too, and, sad to say, very like him. You are better-looking than he is, but you have something of him—there are moments when your voice and your look recall his—and therefore I like you, Antony, for he was my great friend, my good and true friend years ago!"

"Ah! but you never saw him since," said Antony, with evident satisfaction.

"Never; and what is more, I do not think I shall ever see him again. Do not be too glad, Antony. I like to think of your brother, but, as you perceive, I can live without him."

She smiled defiantly in his face, and, rising from beneath the apple tree, walked away. Antony sat looking after her, but he did not venture to follow her. He feared as much as he loved her, and, but for that fear, might never have cared for her. He liked her because she had bright dark eyes and a

pretty face, and a graceful figure, and because she was the mistress of Carnoosie, for which he felt a most tender affection ; but besides that liking there had grown up another, very different from it : a deep and servile love for the hand that alternately caressed and chastised him. He did not merely long to possess Beatrice, he longed to be Beatrice's, to feel one with that noble and bright creature, and lose in her the sense of his own meanness—for, being young, he had yet this much good in him, that he knew his own unworthiness. This negative virtue, however, did not go so far as to check Mr. Antony Gervoise in his suit ; Beatrice Gordon did not want him, but he wanted her, and have her he would. He saw her again as he entered the house. She stood with her mother on the sunlit terrace, looking at the stately trees which grew around Carnoosie, and nodded their green heads to the soft western wind. She leaned with folded arms on the stone balustrade ; the sun shone on her bare head and her graceful neck. Her slight and supple figure had a careless grace, and the very sole of her little upturned shoe, as she tapped the gravel with her foot, had fascination in it for Antony.

The act of speaking to her had given his passion new force. At once he went up to the gallery, and addressing his father, who was looking

at a Cuyyp with half-shut eyes, he said doggedly and insolently :

“If I do not marry Beatrice within three months, I shall leave Carnoosie for good.”

“My goodness!” cried Mr. Gervoise, much startled, “what has happened? I did not even know you were come back.”

“This has happened, that she will not have me, and that she wants Gilbert, whom she is always throwing up in my face.”

“Nonsense, my dear boy; they have not met since they were children. There is nothing in it.”

Antony replied that there was plenty in it, and again vowed that, if he did not get Beatrice, he would leave Carnoosie for good. Now this was a most unpleasant threat. Antony was of age, but his pecuniary matters were in Mr. Gervoise’s hands. The thought of settling was disagreeable in the extreme to that gentleman. He had indeed kindly lent his son some large sums, on good security, of course, but suppose Antony should make an outcry on that matter, and the world should side with Antony. It would not do at all.

“My dear boy,” he said, affectionately, “I will do everything, anything for you, but on one condition: you must follow up the plan you have just suggested, you must leave Carnoosie for a time. I must act in your absence. Let our dear Beatrice

hate me, if needs she will, but she must not hate you. Go and have some nice shooting—say in Scotland ; I will let you have the money, and when you return, you will find Miss Gordon more amiable and compliant than she was this morning.”

The words “ shooting in Scotland ” acted like a spell. Antony calmed down at once, and professed himself ready to go that minute.

“ Go to-day—this afternoon,” said his father; “ it will look well. Beatrice will like it. Besides, I can act at once.”

“ You are not going to hurt her, are you?” asked Antony with some uneasiness.

“ Hurt her!” exclaimed Mr. Gervoise, looking shocked, and making his pimpled face and small ferret eyes look as benevolent as he could; “ why, Antony, don’t you know me?”

“ Ay, that I do,” thought Antony; but, taking Mr. Gervoise’s kindness and forbearance to Beatrice for granted, he suggested that they should settle forthwith the pecuniary preliminaries of his trip to Scotland. To this proposal Mr. Gervoise acceded, and hard and keen was the bargain which this thoughtful father drove with the son whom he loved, however, as the bad can love, at an infinite distance from himself, his interest and convenience. At length the matter was settled; Mr. Gervoise, having received proper security, in case his

son should perish in a railway collision, or die in some other fashion, for he was not his heir, and should guard against so unpleasant a contingency, dismissed him with liberal assurances of paternal affection.

That same day Antony Gervoise left, and that same day, too, Mr. Gervoise began the attack which was to end in Beatrice's defeat. To Beatrice herself he did not speak; he was satisfied with opening his mind to Mrs. Gervoise. For many years that poor lady had not walked beyond the precincts of the terrace. There she sat in fine weather, and there Beatrice sat with her as much as she could. But youth needs motion; and though she was rarely long away, Beatrice generally left her mother in the morning to go to the orchard, and in the afternoon to walk down an avenue of trees, large, stately, and solemn, which was one of the beauties of Carnoosie. Down this avenue Beatrice is walking now. She has just parted from Antony, who has bidden her a sad and subdued farewell, and she pities and half likes him in her heart.

"I wish he would be good," she thought, "I wish he would be good and true. His father is a serpent—a remorseless snake; he is base as well as cruel—a being made to sting and crawl. But there is something better in that poor Antony—not

much, but still something. Besides, he likes me in his way, and, hard as I am with him, he ever comes back to me. I wish he either liked me less, or that I could like him more!"

As she thus soliloquised, Beatrice stopped short; and, looking at her trees, forgot Antony. They were so beautiful, so majestic, and they were her own, and possession was sweet to the mistress of Carnoosie. Her eyes sparkled with delight; these were her only unmixed joys. In all else she found trouble and care; but when she stood alone—the sky above her head, the green grass beneath her feet, her solemn, wide-spreading beeches and gnarled oaks around her, she breathed freely and felt happy. What the prairie is to the Red Indian, and the mountain to the mountaineer, trees were to Beatrice Gordon. Here she tasted that blessing which is the salt of all others, and without which they are poor and tame—liberty. The sense of no unkind eye resting on her, of no spy's perfidious ear lying in wait for every breath which fell from her lips, was sweetness to the captive girl. She was free according to the world's estimate; she was rich, too, and she owned a fair home—but Beatrice knew that she was a prisoner. She had grown up in that thralldom; but the habit which enabled her to endure it, could not lessen her secret hate of it, nor yet make her enjoy less

every moment snatched from her gaolers. Sweet, therefore, was it for her to wander thus, towards the fall of day, in that grey avenue, so still and lonely. To a gayer and a happier girl its gloom and solitude would have seemed oppressive; to Beatrice they yielded relief all the more prized that it was very brief.

"I must go back to my poor darling," she thought, after a while; and, turning her back on her friends, as she often called them in those soliloquies which were a portion of her solitary life, she walked at a brisk pace towards the house. She found Mrs. Gervoise lying on a couch in her room, and that room was now near Beatrice's. For the last year especially, Mr. Gervoise had shown himself bent on conciliating Beatrice, and so far from seeking to part her from her mother, he had done much to throw them together. Beatrice, who could not perhaps be just to him, had concluded that he thus hoped to strengthen his hold upon her, and had hated him none the less that she availed herself fully of the privileges he so graciously allowed her.

But, as we said, she found Mrs. Gervoise in her room, lying as usual on a couch, and looking worn and exhausted.

"Does anything ail you, darling?" she asked; "have you been worried?"

"No, my dear—certainly not. I was only wishing for you."

"Well, here I am." And Beatrice sat down at her mother's feet, and looked earnestly at her flushed face.

"Beatrice."

"Yes, darling."

"I wish we could travel—I do long for change."

Beatrice did not answer.

"I wish you were of age."

"That would make no difference."

"But if you were married, Beatrice."

"I shall never marry, darling."

"Why not?"

"It would never do—never. Let us talk of something else."

"No, Beatrice, I must talk of that. Why do you not marry?"

Beatrice laughed, and asked:—"Who wants me?"

"Oh! Beatrice, who would not want you rather? Why, you know well enough poor Antony is longing for you!"

"Is he?"

"Of course he is, poor fellow! Beatrice, I think that young man is much improved."

Beatrice did not reply. She leaned her cheek upon her hand, and looked steadily at the flowers

on the carpet, whilst her mother continued :

“ And I think, Beatrice, I really do, that if you would have him, we should all be much happier. Think it over, my dear. He is a very nice and good-looking young man, and you would make him amiable and gentle, and you would live together in Carnoosie, and I know Mr. Gervoise would let us travel, and I long for change. Do think it over, Beatrice !”

And Beatrice, whose face was still resting on her hand, and whose eyes were still downcast, was thinking it over. It was the keenest pain she had felt since that sad day when Gilbert had been torn from her ; it was a pain far keener still. For then, if Mr. Gervoise robbed her of her friend, he could not taint the friendship, and now he had frightened and bribed her own mother to act against her. Beatrice could not bear it ; that the being for whose sake she bore all in silence, and without complaint, for whom she was ready to submit to every trial, should, at his threats or entreaties, attempt to persuade her to her lasting misery, was a pang too cruel and too keen ! Therefore did she keep her face leaning on her hand, and her eyes downcast.

“ My dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Gervoise, uneasily, and, leaning upon one elbow, she tried to look in her daughter’s face.

Beatrice turned towards her, and if her mien

was sorrowful and grave, it was also firm and clear, and the warm light from the west that came in through the open window shone on it and lit it well.

“Darling!” she said, gently, “we have a very hard life before us, a very hard life; but there is only one thing for us to do—let us be true to one another, let us be true. Let no one, darling, step in between you and me, and suggest this, or advise that, it would not be for your good or for mine. There is but one being now between us, let us not put two, or we will repent it for ever!”

“My dear,” faltered Mrs. Gervoise, “I meant well.”

“I know you did, darling; but it would be perdition and ruin. I know Antony Gervoise, I know him well, and pity him deeply; but we must live and die apart; between that young man and Beatrice Gordon there never can be the least bond of friendship or of love. I told him so this morning. I believe that is why he has left. I should be happy to think that we shall never meet again, but I suppose I must not hope for it.”

She spoke steadily and distinctly, so distinctly that one might have thought she was anxious every word she uttered might be heard to the furthest extremity of the room, and that no one within hearing should doubt her meaning. But to all

appearance, no one, save Mrs. Gervoise, who was shedding a few slow and penitent tears, was there to hear Beatrice. The large silent room held no witnesses, and no listeners ; the open window was too far from the couch, and was too high for any one standing on the terrace below to hear what passed within. And yet I dare say Beatrice knew what she was saying when she answered Mrs. Gervoise's plaintive question :

“What shall I say to Mr. Gervoise, Beatrice?”

“He will not question you, darling.”

And Beatrice was right enough. Mr. Gervoise never asked his wife how she had fared in her endeavours. He had tried an ambassador, and failed ; he now resolved to act in his own person, but, before doing so, he wisely gave the enemy a week's seeming truce, during which he hoped she would forget the attempt she had resented so keenly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE week was out when Beatrice and her stepfather met in the flower-garden. At once they exchanged a declaration of war. Beatrice was bareheaded, and Mr. Gervoise objected to it. Beatrice tossed her rebellious black curls, and replied that she liked to feel the wind blowing about her. It was Mr. Gervoise's wont, when he wanted to provoke Beatrice into disobedience, to begin very wide of the mark ; accordingly, wishing her to marry Antony, he again said that he objected to her walking about bareheaded, and he forbade it.

Beatrice's answer was not much to the purpose.

"Mr. Raby is coming," she said. "I wrote to tell him that you wanted me to marry Antony, and he is coming."

"You confess writing to my friend Mr. Raby for the purpose of breeding mischief between us!"

"I!" cried Beatrice, all innocence. "I only told him you wanted me to marry Antony; you surely would not object."

Mr. Gervoise excelled more in deeds than in words; Beatrice, on the contrary, had a ready tongue, and did not object to using it. Besides, if Mr. Raby was really coming, he could not draw in his horns with too much speed, so he mildly asked when that gentleman would arrive.

"I only know that he is sure to come," answered Beatrice, walking away.

There was, unfortunately, no doubt about that.

"I must turn the matter over," thought Mr. Gervoise.

And so he did, and to some purpose, as Beatrice found.

Mr. Raby arrived late one evening. He had aged since we saw him last, and got very stout too, but he was little changed otherwise. Mr. Gervoise who received him, congratulated him on his florid health, and Mr. Raby crossly answered that looks signified nothing. Still Mr. Gervoise overflowed with kindness and good-will; would he see Beatrice?—no, it might excite him, and he, Mr. Gervoise, could see Mr. Raby was excitable. Indeed it was a pity he had come down to Carnoosie at this time of the year.

"I shall go down to the kitchen," crossly said Mr. Raby, looking at the black hearth of the cold study. "I see you have got no fires yet, and Jones tells me to avoid the cold."

“Come along,” mysteriously said Mr. Gervoise, “come upstairs with me, and I will show you a room and a fire.”

Mr. Raby hesitated, then complied. He followed Mr. Gervoise upstairs, and was shown by his host into a suite of rooms with fires blazing in every chimney, and wax lights burning on every table. The inner room, which was also the pleasantest and most comfortable, presented Mr. Raby with a delightful prospect—a well-laid table on which a dainty meal was waiting. *It was* a delightful prospect, yet Mr. Raby turned away and sighed.

“Jones says I must have no suppers,” he said faintly, “nothing but gruel.”

“Then you must obey Jones by all means. Mrs. Scot, please to send up some thin, very thin, gruel for Mr. Raby.”

Mrs. Scot came forth from the dark corner of the room, where she had been standing, and silently departed on her errand.

“It would be a mortal sin to let these good things be wasted,” said Mr. Gervoise, “so I shall just sit down and take a slight repast.”

And Mr. Gervoise sat down and took, not a slight, but an abundant meal. He was usually a spare though dainty eater, but Mr. Gervoise was greedy this evening, for Panel had surpassed himself.

In the meanwhile Mr. Raby sat down by the fire, and took his thin gruel and looked irritated and sulky.

"I do not think Jones would forbid this partridge," suddenly said Mr. Gervoise.

"Don't you?" faintly replied Mr. Raby.

"I do not think he would."

Mr. Raby hesitated, Mr. Gervoise settled the matter by putting the coveted morsel on his plate. For the last two months Mr. Raby had been dieted by the inexorable Doctor Jones. He had fasted like any anchorite, and led but a hard life of it. Temptation now assailed him, and such temptation as Mr. Raby did not know how to withstand. The warm room, the blazing fire, the easy chair in which he sat—it had been taken out of Mr. Gervoise's own room—the dainty and fragrant viands before him; all these coming after a cold journey were too much for Mr. Raby's fortitude. His eyes glistened, he seized his knife and fork with a trembling hand, for there was a consciousness of danger and sin in Mr. Raby's inner heart, and he ate.

"Jones would never forgive me," he said when he at length pushed his plate away.

"He need not know it," suggested Mr. Gervoise blandly, "and I am so glad you came. Just fancy! Antony fell in love with Beatrice, and pro-

posed to her, sir! I soon packed him off. He is cooling himself on the Scotch moors now."

Mr. Raby looked deeply perplexed, and after a while asked what Mr. Gervoise's objection to the match might be.

"My dear sir, surely I need not tell you! Now don't look so—so very much amazed. No mysteries between us, Mr. Raby. All above board."

"Mr. Gervoise, you agitate me. What is it?"

"Mr. Raby, you do not mean to say you do not know that poor dear Beatrice is—how shall I call it?—eccentric?"

"Mad!"

"Eccentric," mildly corrected Mr. Gervoise.

Mr. Raby remained silent, stunned with the magnitude of the blow. If Beatrice was mad, as he plainly termed it, why, then his fatal trust was a more fearful snare than ever. What would Jones say to it? If Beatrice was mad, she must be locked up, and, more horrible still, she would never be of age—never! Mad people lived long, he had always heard so—it was too much.

"Mr. Gervoise," he said reproachfully, "you should not have told me so after supper, it might have been the death of me. It was enough to make the gout fly to my stomach."

"My dear sir, how was I to know you were not

aware of it? Beatrice was always so. Besides, I gave you many hints."

"Is she dangerous?"

"Rarely," kindly replied Mr. Gervoise; "indeed hers is insanity," the word seemed to slip out, "under its subtlest and mildest form. But I was very imprudent in allowing her and Antony to be so much together. It is hard for her, poor girl!"

Mr. Raby faintly asked if Mr. Gervoise thought him safe in his room.

"Safe! Beatrice would not hurt a fly."

"Yes, but mad people——"

"My dear sir, you must not call Miss Beatrice Gordon the mistress of Carnoosie, mad! You must not say a word to a soul on the subject, not even to Doctor Jones. Come, give me your word—mind I speak in strict confidence."

Mr. Gervoise was so alarmed, and he so teased and worried Mr. Raby, that the promise was given by that gentleman; but he kept *in petto* the resolve of writing to Jones the next morning a letter, of which the purport should be: "Suppose an individual afflicted with the gout should be in the same house with an insane person, what might the consequences be to the aforesaid individual?"

"It is such a comfort to have you here," sighed Mr. Gervoise, rising; "I shall sleep all the better for it to-night."

"Shall we have to get her locked up?" asked Mr. Raby, gloomily.

Mr. Gervoise looked horrified. Lock up the mistress of Carnoosie! Heaven forbid. No; if they could indeed get her safely married. Mr. Raby brightened.

"Wouldn't your son?" he interrupted.

"Yes, sir, he would; but you do not suppose I would entail the curse of eccentricity on my grandchildren."

Mr. Gervoise's indignant tone silenced Mr. Raby. Beatrice's step-father resumed:

"We must find her a husband, but, first of all, we must enlighten her. Beatrice has a vague consciousness of her infirmity; but if this consciousness became certainty, if she could know her real mental condition, who knows but it might save her?"

"Well, then, why don't you tell her?" crossly asked Mr. Raby.

"She would not believe me; but if you, with your fine tact——"

"Mr. Gervoise, don't try that—don't."

"You decline?"

"I do."

"I dare not."

"And want to put it upon me—thanks!"

"My dear sir, Beatrice would not hurt a fly."

But being eccentric, she is susceptible, and being susceptible——”

“I tell you, sir, that I will not have the poor girl going off into hysterics in my presence. Jones would never forgive me.”

“Oh! if you plead your health, I am dumb; moreover, my conscience is at rest.”

And thus, pretty sure that Mr. Raby would not repeat a word of their conversation to Beatrice, Mr. Gervoise bade him a good evening.

Mr. Raby spent a sleepless night. Perhaps his supper was too much for him, and Beatrice's insanity, and his position as her trustee, were enough to keep him awake, and make Doctor Jones's hair stand on end. If she would but marry Antony! A mad girl, though rich, could scarcely hope for a better match. Thus thought Mr. Raby, until, after tossing about for several hours, it occurred to him that he might take the word of some one else besides Mr. Gervoise, concerning Beatrice's eccentricity.

Chance—was it chance?—brought Mrs. Scot to his rooms the next morning, and suggested the very person to whom he should apply. He did so with much caution, merely asking if Miss Gordon was up.

“I shall see, sir. Miss Gordon's hours vary.”

“Do they? But her health is good, I hope.”

"Why, yes, sir, considering."

This word "considering," tempted Mr. Raby; he went and shut the door, then came back, and said nervously:

"Mrs. Scot, you have been years in the family, and I am Miss Gordon's trustee; strange rumours have reached me—allow me to ask you, Mrs. Scot, how far they are founded upon fact?"

"What rumours, sir?" asked Mrs. Scot, bluntly.

"Mrs. Scot, what did you mean by the word 'considering?' Why should it be 'considering?'"

"I did not say 'considering,' sir," sharply said Mrs. Scot; "I know my place too well, I hope, to say 'considering.'"

"You did, Mrs. Scot!" exclaimed Mr. Raby, excitedly—"you did, and you owe me the truth—I am Miss Gordon's trustee, and I have got the gout, and excitement may be fatal to me."

"Then you had better not stay in Carnoosie," said Mrs. Scot.

"Why so, Mrs. Scot? just tell me why?"

"The air is exciting, sir; at least, I always heard it was."

"Mrs. Scot, I appeal to your conscience—I lay it on your conscience—what is the matter with Miss Gordon?"

"Nothing that I know of, sir," doggedly replied Mrs. Scot.

"Is it the air of Carnoosie that disagrees with her?—is it too exciting for her?"

Mrs. Scot looked sullen, and did not reply.

"Is she excitable?" implored Mr. Raby; "you can surely tell me that, Mrs. Scot."

"Well, sir, I think she is."

"And eccentric?"

Mrs. Scot looked hard at him.

"That will do, sir," she said, sternly; "if you were ten times Miss Gordon's trustee, I'll answer no more such questions. I know what my place would be worth, if Mr. Gervoise thought that I told tales on his step-daughter, and I don't mind telling you, sir, that he shall know every word as has passed between us this morning."

"As you please, Mrs. Scot," very indignantly rejoined Mr. Raby, who had forgotten that such, whether she told him so or not, would very probably be Mrs. Scot's most natural proceeding; "as you please, ma'am; and he angrily passed by her and went downstairs. In the hall he met Beatrice. He could not repress a little start on seeing her, and, with her quick perception, Beatrice felt it was not a start of pleasure.

"How are you, Mr. Raby?" she asked, holding out her hand.

"Very well, my dear," he replied, trying not to look nervous, "and how are you?"

"I am quite well," replied Beatrice brightly.

Mr. Raby longed to ask if her head ached, or if this windy morning did not make her feel excitable, but he restrained himself, and, unconscious of his strange manner, stood looking at her without making way for her to pass, or attempting himself to go on.

Beatrice eyed him keenly.

"Will you look at the garden, Mr. Raby," she asked cheerfully.

Mr. Raby did not dare to decline the offer, and out they went. They were no sooner out of hearing than Beatrice said quickly :

"Mr. Raby, are you offended with me?—did I do wrong to write? Are you angry?"

In great trepidation Mr. Raby hastened to reply :

"My dear, I am not at all offended, I was delighted to receive your letter, and I am delighted to see you!"

"I should not have thought so," drily replied Beatrice. "At all events, Mr. Raby, I feel and know that Mr. Gervoise has been saying something about me to you."

"Not a word," hastily interrupted Mr. Raby.

Beatrice looked incredulous and disappointed.

"Whatever it may be," she persisted, "believe nothing of me which your own experience does not confirm."

She spoke with a sad earnestness which struck

Mr. Raby. His mind felt in strange confusion; suppose she was not mad after all. Oh! how he would like Jones to be here! Beatrice saw the advantage she had gained, and she pursued:

"I was wanted to marry Antony Gervoise. Do you know him, Mr. Raby?"

"He was not here when I came last."

"It is a pity," said Beatrice with a bitter laugh; "he is a tame tiger, you know. He will lick your hand and be ready to devour you; one must not be angry with him, it is his way."

Mr. Raby loved plain language; he was born commonplace and matter-of-fact, and Beatrice's little girlish flight of speech, "a tame tiger," gave him strange thoughts. With a cunning which was not in his nature, and which intense love of self-preservation alone could draw out, he laid a trap for Beatrice.

"Is that young man really a tame tiger?" he asked.

"He is indeed, and a beautiful tiger too; a real Bengal native of the jungle, cruel and cowardly. You should see his smile, it is frightful, and so sweet. Mr. Gervoise has a print like it. A Joanna of Naples by Vinci; a fair lovely girl with delicate lips, but so perfidious. She was a Bluebeard, you know, and killed all her husbands. She too was a tigress."

Beatrice spoke with some animation, her eyes sparkled, her lips were parted—she looked excited. Mr. Raby watched her, and a vague though firm conviction that Beatrice was on the brink if she had not passed the fearful bounds of insanity, entered his mind, and sank there, never to be removed again.

“Don’t you think you had better marry him?” he said, after a brief pause.

“Marry Antony!” exclaimed Beatrice.

“Why, yes, my dear, I confess to you it would be a great relief to me if you were safely married.”

And Mr. Raby sighed to think what a relief it would be.

“But I cannot marry Antony,” indignantly cried Beatrice; “no girl who knows him can, it would be rushing on ruin.”

“Could you not marry his brother,” suggested Mr. Raby, suddenly remembering that Mr. Gervoise had once mentioned something of the kind.

“We have not met since we were children,” replied Beatrice, becoming crimson.

“My dear,” persisted Mr. Raby, “take the advice of a friend, marry as soon as you can.”

Beatrice remained mute. She had nothing to say. Mr. Raby was won over to the enemy; how and why mattered little, it was so. She looked at him with the same sad earnestness she had betrayed

once before, and again it moved him to a passing doubt. But Mr. Raby was never prompt to act or to conclude.

"I must get Jones to see her," he thought, and in the meanwhile he kept the vague belief of Beatrice's insanity, referring certainly to a doubtful future. Beatrice walked silently by his side till, turning a path, they met Mr. Gervoise, brisk, lively, and cheerful, with a smile on his lips, and triumph in his eye. Beatrice answered the look he gave her with one that said :

"Yes, you prevail now, but my turn shall come yet."

This was more easily said than done, as Beatrice found. Mr. Raby's presence happened to be required by Mr. Gervoise, who thought the moment a favourable one for accounts, and Mr. Raby stayed in Carnoosie and lived high. "In for a penny, in for a pound," he recklessly thought. But though day after day Beatrice watched for an opportunity of speaking to her trustee, it never came. To her surprise she saw that Mr. Gervoise abetted her efforts, but that he and Mr. Raby were at issue on this point. All her attempts, though seconded by her step-father, were baffled. If this gentleman left them together, Mr. Raby called him back, or followed him out ; if she met Mr. Raby in the garden, he retreated precipitately ; if she went into

the house after him, he took refuge in his rooms, and at the end of ten days he said one evening that he would leave the next morning. Again Mr. Gervoise looked at Beatrice, who smiled scornfully.

But Beatrice's resolve was taken. She would see Mr. Raby and speak to him whether he liked it or not. She would know why this lukewarm protector had become almost an enemy. She knew that he sat up and read after retiring for the night, and Beatrice's mind was made up—she would follow him to his last stronghold.

“Good night, my dear,” he said, turning towards her as he left Mrs. Gervoise's sitting-room; “and good-bye, too, for I shall be off with dawn.”

“Good night, Mr. Raby,” quietly replied Beatrice, “I shall see you before you go.”

With some uneasiness Mr. Raby begged that she would not take the trouble on his account. Beatrice smiled without answering, and he left the room.

Beatrice waited awhile before she left, too. She went to her room first, then slipped downstairs again and stole out on the terrace. A light was burning in the window of Mr. Raby's sitting-room—now was her time. Softly and noiselessly she entered the house again. To reach Mr. Raby's rooms she had to pass through a long line of

chambers on the first floor. She did so in the dark, and at length found herself at his door. There she paused and listened. Not a sound betrayed his presence within, yet a ray of light stole out on the dark landing—he was there still. She knocked and got no reply, but she heard a piece of wood tumbling down into the fender. She knocked again, still Beatrice received no intimation to enter. She took heart, opened the door, and went in boldly, saying,

“Excuse me, Mr. Raby, but I must speak to you before you go.”

Mr. Raby neither looked up nor answered. He sat near a small table leaning forward, and Beatrice fancied that he was writing. She fancied, but was not sure; two wax lights burnt on the table, but the room was a large one, and she stood at the further extremity. Whether he had heard her or not, it was too late to retreat, Beatrice walked steadily towards him, and when she stood near his chair she said entreatingly,

“Do not be offended with me, Mr. Raby, I cannot help myself, I must speak to you—do not be offended.”

Mr. Raby did not stir. He still leaned forward, a sheet of paper lay before him, a pen was in his hand. The light of the two wax candles shone on his face—it was purple, his mouth was half-open,

his nether lip hung a little, his blue eyes were fixed in a glassy stare. Beatrice looked at him, and turned cold with dumb horror. It was not Mr. Raby whom she saw, and she knew it. She knew that grim destroyer whom all recognize from man to his dog with intuitive knowledge and secret hate; but she stood powerless to move, to speak, almost to breathe, so awful was the shock of surprise, when a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned round with a faint cry and saw Mr. Gervoise, who had followed her unperceived.

"I am afraid dear Mr. Raby is dead," composedly said her step-father, walking up to his co-trustee.

He went to his chair and shook him.

"Apoplexy, I suppose," said Mr. Gervoise.

"Monsieur Panel knows how to bleed," cried Beatrice.

She sprang to the bell and rang it violently. The call was answered, Monsieur Panel was summoned and used his lancet, whilst Doctor Rogerson was sent for. But the blood was already frozen in Mr. Raby's veins, and when Doctor Rogerson came in all haste, he declared life to have been extinct some time.

"And it is all over!" said Beatrice, looking at the dead man, who, an hour ago, had stood living and warm before her.

"All over, I am sorry to say," replied Doctor Rogerson.

"Apoplexy, I suppose?" suggested Mr. Gervoise.

"Just so."

"Poor dear Mr. Raby! I fear, Monsieur Panel, your good cheer did for him. I really fear it."

Beatrice gave her step-father a keen searching look, which he bore with perfect composure.

And this was the end of Mr. Raby.

A few days later Mr. Gervoise followed him to the grave. When he came in from the funeral, he said to his wife, with whom Beatrice was sitting,

"I am so sorry for poor Mr. Raby, but he ought to have known better; Doctor Jones had warned him against high living, and poor dear Mr. Raby would live high. It was not the gout, though, that carried him off, but apoplexy. Poor Mr. Raby! we shall miss him."

"God help me!" thought Beatrice; "it is for me that this man died!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE is a well-known saying concerning Rome and the many paths that lead to it. Even so is the aim of a strong will ; every road can bear you to that goal. Mr. Gervoise, who hated direct action, now resolved to attack the citadel of Beatrice's rebellion from the quarter whence she least expected such attack. She loved Mr. Ray, and Mr. Ray believed in Mr. Gervoise. Now then was the time to make use of this valuable though unconscious ally. Mr. Ray had recovered his usual health, and was once more a daily visitor at Carnoosie. On the morning that followed the day of Mr. Raby's funeral, Mr. Gervoise, who was laudably anxious to render Mr. Ray useful without delay, asked that gentleman to join him in the study.

Mr. Ray had come early in order to read longer with Beatrice, and being a methodical man, he was annoyed at Mr. Gervoise's request. He asked if it would not do after his lesson. Very gravely

Mr. Gervoise assured him it would not ; and Mr. Ray yielded, and, being a good man, smiled internally at his own discomposure.

"And how is dear Miss Ray?" began Mr. Gervoise, confidentially.

"My sister is very well, I am much obliged to you."

"I am so glad. Miss Ray and I are great cronies. Mr. Ray, I would advise you to take care of her."

Now it was one of Mr. Ray's peculiarities to consider Miss Ray as quite a girl ; he took this harmless joke amiss. What business had Mr. Gervoise, a married man, to talk so of Miss Ray ? It was scarcely delicate. He looked stiff.

"I have a great admiration for Miss Ray—especially for her character," persisted Mr. Gervoise ; "it is a beautiful character, Mr. Ray."

"It is, sir," warmly said Mr. Ray, "a lovely character, I may say ; there is something quite angelic about Miss Ray."

"There is," sententiously said Mr. Gervoise ; "but if I make her the topic of discourse, Mr. Ray, it is that I have a purpose in letting you know my high appreciation of Miss Ray. Sir—I want her."

Mr. Ray looked inquiring.

"I want her, sir, for my poor Beatrice—a good,

warm-hearted girl, but sadly in need of some wholesome feminine teaching. Mrs. Gervoise is too delicate, Mr. Ray, and you and I are men unable to compete with a high-spirited girl. We want Miss Ray."

Mr. Ray remained silent, and looked thoughtful. He could not imagine what Miss Ray was wanted for.

"I am sorry to say that Beatrice is a little bit of a flirt," continued Mr. Gervoise; "my son Antony has to my great displeasure been paying her some attention lately; I had other views for him, but boys will be boys, and Beatrice encouraged him. In short, matters came to a crisis. He proposed, without my knowledge, and was accepted—still without my knowledge. How I discovered the truth matters little; my first act was to send Antony out of the house. I even thought everything could be put a stop to at once; but, Mr. Ray, it could not. It cannot, Mr. Ray—Beatrice's name is at stake. Miss Jameson, Mrs. Scot, the servants, have seen what has been going on. I was blind, but they were clear-sighted; there is but one remedy now—they must marry. Mr. Raby, my late co-trustee, and I were agreed on this point—the sooner Beatrice becomes my son's wife the better it will be. The young lady, however, has changed her mind, or says she has; and after

going as far with Antony as she could well go, she will not have him. Now, Mr. Ray, I will be frank with you. I would rather they did not marry; but in duty, in honour, can I do less than make this thoughtless girl marry the man with whom she has gone so very far. It is for this that I want dear Miss Ray. She alone can show Beatrice the matter in its true light."

This speech, which Mr. Gervoise had weighed well, had many good points. It was almost all true; Beatrice had flirted with Antony, or at least she had said and done with him what Miss Jameson, Mrs. Scot, and the servants had called flirtation. Moreover, Mr. Ray had seen it with perplexity and pain, and was ready to believe Mr. Gervoise in this matter. His assistance, therefore, modestly asked under Miss Ray's name, was almost secure on this head. But unfortunately Mr. Gervoise went too far; a hair's-breadth did it—a want of delicacy in his words, in his tones, and looks, and hints, shocked and angered the gentle Mr. Ray. Beatrice, his darling Beatrice, the soul of maidenly innocence and womanly honour, accused of going too far with Antony—with any man! It was too much; his eyes lit, his lips quivered.

"Mr. Gervoise," he said, "have you weighed your words well?"

"Quite well," deliberately replied Mr. Gervoise.

"Well, then, sir," indignantly said Mr. Ray, rising and sitting down again, "you are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken in *you*, sir," replied Mr. Gervoise, rising, and looking down at Mr. Ray from the heights of indignant virtue. "I know you, I have watched you and that deluded girl. I need say no more. Please to leave this house, sir."

It was with the grandest courtesy that Mr. Gervoise inflicted this insult on Beatrice's teacher, and waved his hand towards the door. The blood flew to Mr. Ray's pale face, and settled there in an indignant flush. He rose and left the room without deigning to answer one word. He was calm, though sad, when he reached the cottage.

"How is dear Mr. Gervoise?" asked Miss Ray; "he looked *so* ill at the funeral yesterday!"

"We have been deceived in Mr. Gervoise, my dear," sighed Mr. Ray. "I am sorry for Beatrice."

And leaving Miss Ray with an uplifted watering-pot in her hand, so great was her amazement, Mr. Ray entered his study, and tried to calm his mind and pray.

Beatrice sat in the library, vainly waiting for Mr. Ray. What ailed him that he did not come? Was he ill again? She looked at the heavy clock in its carved oaken case. Mr. Ray was an hour behind his time.

"He will not come to-day," thought Beatrice, with a sigh.

Even as she came to this conclusion, the door of the library opened, and Mr. Gervoise appeared. Beatrice's face darkened. Mr. Gervoise never entered the library; that apartment was Beatrice's by tacit consent. What brought his hateful presence to the spot which, since Gilbert was gone, had never known any visitor save her pale and gentle master? She rose abruptly, as if to leave the room.

"Pray be seated," gracefully said Mr. Gervoise. "I want the favour of your society for just five minutes, no more. I have a matter of importance to mention."

Beatrice half smiled. She could guess what was coming, but she declared herself ready to bestow on Mr. Gervoise the favour he so respectfully solicited. The window was open. Mr. Gervoise closed it carefully, opened the door to see that no one was listening outside, then, returning to Beatrice, he began with a confidential whisper:

"I heard from Antony this morning. Beatrice, he is a noble boy."

He looked amiably at her, but, alas! his bloated face and weak eyes now belied all amiable meaning.

"He wrote about you, Beatrice, most tenderly. Beatrice, I do not wish to be severe, but why trifle with him? Why encourage, then banish him? Take care, he loves you fondly, but do not be imprudent."

"Mr. Gervoise, that will not do," haughtily said Beatrice.

"No, my dear, it will not."

Beatrice rose to leave the room. Mr. Gervoise rose too, and stood between her and the door.

"Miss Gordon," he said, "this is unbecoming; it is indecorous. You will compel me to take strong measures."

"I wonder what you will do?" asked Beatrice, her black eyes laughing with more mischief than anger.

"All that a parent and guardian should do, madam. I will lock you up if need be."

"Lock me up!" said Beatrice, seemingly amazed. "Lock me up, to make me marry Antony!"

"No, madam. No, Miss Gordon, not for that, But because you have low inclinations," added Mr. Gervoise, very grandly, and waving his hands, as if to dispel the gross vapour of Beatrice's perversity from before his immaculate countenance. "Low inclinations, I say, which a guardian is bound to resist, even by the use of lock and key. I regret to add that I can prove it."

A blush of shame and indignation rose to Beatrice's open brow and clear cheek, a disdainful smile curled her finely-carved lips, and she left the room without a word.

Mr. Gervoise did not attempt to detain her. They met in the course of the day, and he did not renew the subject ; but when Beatrice went to her mother's room after dinner, Mr. Gervoise followed her up, and said, with much dignity :

"Miss Gordon, may I hope you are ready to express some regret for your disrespectful language?"

Beatrice, who sat embroidering near the table, was mute.

Mrs. Gervoise half sat up on her couch, and entreatingly said : "My dear!"

Thus adjured, Beatrice spoke.

"I will never marry Antony," she said, deliberately.

"Madam, you know that I do not wish you to marry Antony ; but since you compel me to touch on this subject, let me tell you that you shall not have the dangerous liberty of going to your ruin. I will confine you to your room, if need be."

Beatrice laughed a low silvery laugh, full of disdain. Her cheek was resting on her hand, her eyes were bent on the floor. She laughed again, and looked up in his face.

"Strange that you should know me so little," she said. "Why, these eleven years of strife have always ended in your defeat, and you think to conquer me now, Mr. Gervoise."

"Beatrice!—Beatrice!" entreated her mother.

"I shall not say another word," said Beatrice, softly; "and lest I should be tempted I shall bid you good night at once, darling."

She softly kissed her cheek and left the room. Mr. Gervoise glared after her, and then he glared at his wife, but he did not speak. It was one of this man's peculiarities that his wrath found no external outlet. He could not stamp or rave or swear. His was not the open and violent passion of a more generous nature. Within him boiled and seethed the venom which with others evaporates in speech. It remained in his heart, it mingled with his very blood—a fearful poison to himself as well as a danger to his enemy. The disease which preyed on his vitals and showed itself in his blotched face, had found its source in that mental idiosyncrasy. The outward man figured the inward man in more respects than one. If he had dared, Mr. Gervoise would have struck his helpless and innocent wife, and thus taken fit revenge for Beatrice's insolence. But he was not weak in his badness, and on principle he had ever shunned violence. His great guide and moral code was the law. So

far as it would let him go, he went, without remorse or shame—never a step beyond it. No temptation could make him swerve from this line—no seeming impunity could lead him into possible peril. Blows leave marks, or, when inflicted on the weak, cause cries and screams; and servants, though bribed, may not be faithful to their corrupter. Never, therefore, had Mr. Gervoise laid a finger on his much-suffering wife. He had other and safer means of torment at his command.

“Mrs. Gervoise,” he said after Beatrice had left the room, “matters have come to a sad issue between your daughter and me. I advise you to interfere for her sake, if not for mine. I will do my duty to her, come what may, and that duty is to conquer her rebellious spirit and diseased inclinations. After going as far with my son, Antony, as she could well go, your daughter has committed herself with a person whom I shall not name; but whom with my consent, she shall never see again—never, Mrs. Gervoise. I have given her fair warning of the course I mean to pursue—fair warning. Since I cannot by mild arguments prevail with her, compulsion, such compulsion as a guardian and a father has a right to use, shall be my method. Miss Gordon shall not leave her room until she becomes amenable to reason.”

Mrs. Gervoise's pale lips parted to reply, but

her husband waved his hand and said briefly—

“Not now, Mrs. Gervoise, not now.”

And without giving her time to speak, he left the room.

She rose trembling and ready to weep, for the least emotion tried her too much. She went at once to Beatrice's room, and she found Beatrice writing a letter.

“My dear,” she entreated, “Beatrice, what are you doing?”

“I am writing to Mr. Ray, darling.”

“Oh! Beatrice, my dear, do not. Mr. Gervoise is dreadfully angry. I know he is mistaken, but do not write to Mr. Ray; he means to lock you up, Beatrice.

“So he has told me,” answered Beatrice composedly.

“Beatrice, do yield for once.”

Beatrice gave her mother a tender, compassionate look.

“Darling, how can you speak so?” she asked. “To yield would be to sink into our double ruin, yours as well as mine. I cannot yield. Besides, do you suppose it is Mr. Ray he desires me to give up? Why, he does not care about Mr. Ray, the mildest, the most inoffensive of human beings. He wants me to marry Antony, that is why he locks me up, darling, for that, and nothing else.”

Mrs. Gervoise wrung her hands and moaned piteously.

"But if he does lock you up, Beatrice, what is to become of us?"

Beatrice smiled and looked at the little French clock on her mantel-piece. The gilt Cupid seated on the round ball-like dial was now pointing to ten.

"I am not locked up yet," said Beatrice, "and before this hour to-morrow I shall not only be free, but Mr. Gervoise himself will entreat me to leave my room, and resume my liberty. Trust to me, darling, and go and sleep. There is a kiss for you, good night."

Mrs. Gervoise submitted—she was accustomed to yield to Beatrice, to trust in and believe her. Besides, what could she do? She was the most gentle, but also the weakest and most helpless of beings, and but for her daughter would long ago have sunk into abject slavery. It was Beatrice who was strong and resolute for both. But there were times when the task was too arduous, when the unnatural strain on this young girl's mind and energies conquered her, and she sank prostrate beneath the heavy burden.

When the door closed on her mother, Beatrice felt very weak and very worn. She laid her head on the edge of the bed, and clasping her hands

above it, longed with wild and passionate longing for rest, even though that rest should be that of the grave. She could not help it. She knew Mr. Gervoise, she knew what was coming, and she shrank with horror and loathing from a struggle so remorseless. Tears, of which she was not conscious, flowed down her cheeks, and she only felt them when the door opened, and looking up she saw Mr. Gervoise, and indignantly checked and shook them away. Scarcely had he entered the room, when he saw on the table the letter Beatrice was writing, and which her mother had interrupted. With a dart forward Mr. Gervoise seized the prey, and having read the first words, "My dear Mr. Ray," he crushed the paper indignantly in his hands, and looked with severe displeasure at Beatrice.

"Miss Gordon," he said, "once for all, I forbid you to have any intercourse with that person—once for all."

Beatrice rose, looked at him disdainfully, and did not answer. Mr. Gervoise continued:

"I shall call on Mr. Ray this very evening, and express to him my sense of his conduct."

"Mr. Gervoise," said Beatrice, with some emotion, "Mr. Ray is in ill-health; be careful of what you do. Doctor Rogerson has acknowledged to me that any strong emotion might be fatal to him."

Mr. Gervoise looked disdainful.

"That is not the question, Miss Gordon," he said; "the question is, whether you will be submissive or not?"

"*Je comprends !*" replied Beatrice, in French, and using words which were often in Mr. Gervoise's mouth. "Mr. Ray has, as you justly say, nothing to do with this; the question is, will I marry Antony or not? My submission failing, I am to be locked up. My reply is this: lock me up at your peril, lock me up if you dare!"

Beatrice spoke in a clear, distinct, and even voice, neither loud nor passionate. Her dark eyes flashed with gentle light, and shone on Mr. Gervoise with radiant defiance. A smile, sweet in its disdain, curled her delicate lips. She had never in her whole life looked half so handsome as she did then, and Mr. Gervoise, who saw himself in the glass above her toilette table, hated her cordially for her beauty.

"Miss Gordon," he said, "I warn you to attempt escape at your peril. The windows are high, you might find it dangerous, and the law would justify me."

Beatrice shook her head and laughed.

"Escape!" she said; "and escape through the window, and that in my own house, too! You do not know me, Mr. Gervoise. No, trust me, a free

heart has other ways of securing liberty. And now please to leave me. This room is mine, and though you may lock the door, I do not suppose you mean to remain in it. The house is large, and I can spare you another and a better one."

"Madam," said Mr. Gervoise, with his grandest courtesies, "I shall keep a record of that speech."

"Do," replied Beatrice, sitting down at her toilette table, and shaking back her curls from her flushed face.

In the mirror before her she saw Mr. Gervoise smile, then turn to the door, open it softly, and steal out through the narrow opening.

"A serpent, a real serpent!" thought Beatrice, and she laughed scornfully to herself as the key turned in the lock.

Beatrice was a prisoner in her own house, and within a few months of her majority. Her courage had risen with the contest of words between her and Mr. Gervoise; but now that she was alone, she could not help thinking rather sadly:

"I wonder if the girls who have been reared with infinite love and tenderness, around whom everything has smiled from their birth, I wonder if they know their happiness? I dare say not. I dare say they think more of not having a new dress, of not going to this ball, of not having that

man for a partner, than I do of sitting here alone in this great house, which is mine, locked up in my room, at the mercy of a man who is fattening on my substance. Poor silly things! no wonder they go through life like butterflies, never having had aught save its sunshine and its flowers. No wonder they don't know how to grow old, and remain children till they die!"

And Beatrice sighed, and leaning her cheek on her hand, felt old in sorrow and in care—very old indeed. But she was young in years after all. Five minutes had not passed before Beatrice, rising, shook her bright head, and smiled defiantly at Mr. Gervoise. Five minutes later her head lay on her pillow, and Beatrice was fast and sound asleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT eight the next morning, Beatrice's door was unlocked, and Mrs. Scot entered the room, bearing a tray, on which was Beatrice's breakfast.

Beatrice had overslept herself. Mrs. Scot's entrance awoke her. She opened her eyes, leaned up on one elbow, and looked dreamily at the stern housekeeper, who was silently and busily laying the breakfast-things on a small square table.

"You need not, Mrs. Scot," composedly said Miss Gordon. "I shall not breakfast in my room. Take those things down-stairs, and tell Mr. Ger-voise that I shall either breakfast below or not at all."

Mrs. Scot took no notice of this speech, and went on settling the table. Beatrice smiled, and curling round in her bed, prepared for another sleep. Mrs. Scot left the room, turned the key in the lock, and walked down-stairs.

"Now comes the battle between hunger and Beatrice Gordon," thought the mistress of Car-

noosie. "I wonder what it is to be really hungry? I shall know it before the sun sets. Châteaubriand, whom I was reading the other day, knew it too. In the very city to which he returned ambassador in state, he fasted three days, looking in with famished eyes at the shops where food lay visible, and unattainable. Mr. Gervoise will never keep me locked up three days, but he will leave food within my reach, the tempting serpent! I shall know what the torments of Tantalus were; bearable enough, I dare say."

Beatrice was too proud to shrink from her self-inflicted trial. She rose, dressed leisurely, and with care, and sat down and read. Mrs. Scot found her thus engaged when she came up with her luncheon. This time Beatrice did not deign to address her, but never raised her eyes from her book. Thus passed the day. Beatrice's luncheon shared the fate of Beatrice's breakfast, and when dinner-time came round, and Mrs. Scot appeared again, she found the second meal untouched and untasted like the first. She tried to catch a look of Beatrice's face, and to read there how she bore this long fast; but Miss Gordon stood by the open window, looking out at her trees, on which the western light shone full and golden, and her back remained turned to Mrs. Scot.

The account which the housekeeper gave of what

was passing in Beatrice's room, was probably not quite satisfactory to her master, for she had not been gone five minutes, before the door she had locked was opened again, and Mr. Gervoise himself appeared. This time Beatrice looked round.

"Miss Gordon," he said, with virtuous indignation, "what is the meaning of this?"

Beatrice smiled haughtily and defiantly in his face.

"I told you so," she said—"I told you that a free heart has other means of escape than either doors or windows. I am no tame bird, Mr. Gervoise, to be kept in a cage, and be fed there. Try if you can starve me into submission, and conquer me thus, if you can or dare!"

"Miss Gordon," said Mr. Gervoise, in a cold, distinct voice, "you shall not leave this room until you have acknowledged yourself conquered."

Without waiting for her answer, he left the room, and again locked the door. The sun set, twilight, then night came. No light was brought to Beatrice. "Solitary confinement in all its pleasantness," she thought; "well, it must be borne, I suppose." She began to feel very faint and exhausted. She threw herself, dressed as she was, on her bed, but sleep would not come to her. She was lightheaded, giddy, and weak. She tried to forget the food which lay within reach on her

table, but she could not. It haunted her. She thought of it with a restless and eager longing, that grew in intensity as time sped. It seemed days since a morsel had passed her lips. All the tales of famished prisoners, or starving mariners, which Beatrice had ever read, came back to her now. The crew of the *Medusa*, Ugolino in his prison, were her companions in this sickening vigil. There were moments when her courage failed her, when she thought of yielding; but then pride stung her fiercely, and the memory of Mr. Gervoise's mocking eye gave her power to bear and suffer. It was near midnight, and Beatrice was sinking into feverish slumbers, when a light which flashed across her eyes awoke her. She looked up and saw her mother's tearful face bending over her.

"Beatrice, my treasure, my darling," she said, "if you love me, take something; eat, drink—take something."

"I have drunk," replied Beatrice; "do not trouble about me, darling, it will be nothing, and I shall soon be free."

Mrs. Gervoise wrung her hands.

"Beatrice, he says he will not yield, and you know him. Beatrice, if you do not wish to break my heart, give in and eat. Oh! Beatrice, it drives me distracted to think you have eaten nothing this whole day."

She could scarcely speak for tears and sobs. Beatrice sat up in her bed, and drawing her mother towards her, she said gently and soothingly :

“Darling, listen to me, and mind every word I say. He has let you come, not through pity for you, but out of hate to me, that I may either yield, or feel a keener pang in resisting ; but, as I said, listen to me, and once for all understand me.”

Mrs. Gervoise checked her weeping. Her daughter continued :

“Darling, if I were to do as you wish me, and touch a morsel of that food, I should be a slave for ever, and we should both be undone. It is my liberty I am fighting for, and your weal, my poor oppressed darling. Next year I am of age, and, to all seeming, Mr. Gervoise’s power over me ends ; but if he did not know of another and keener hold upon me than that of the law, do you think he would venture so far ? Darling, he would not. But there it is. Whilst he has you, he has me. Whilst he will let me stay with you, I will never leave you—never ; for I have vowed to protect and defend you, and so help me Heaven. I will ! Now the question is this : Am I, because I stay with you, to give myself up bound hand and foot to his good will ? He is trying hard for it—very hard ; but vainly, let us hope. If I show him that even now, when he has some sort of right and power over me,

he cannot subdue me, he will not attempt it again, when both right and power are over. It is the liberty of my whole life that I am fighting for to-day. Wonder not if I fight to the last, and refuse to yield."

"But, Beatrice, he says he will leave Carnoosie when you are of age."

Beatrice laughed.

"He leave Carnoosie and its pictures, and its gardens, and its wines, and its style and consequence! No, darling, do not believe that. He will not. He is not rich, and he adores wealth. He has grown accustomed to its enjoyments too, and he cannot and will not relinquish them for the mediocrity of his own fortunes. He will never leave Carnoosie whilst you live—never, for he knows that I will not marry and forsake you. He knows it, and trades on that tenderness; let him, only let him also know that I am and will be free in all else."

"But, Beatrice, this will kill you."

Beatrice laughed again.

"Why, I have not fasted more than twenty-four hours yet," she said; "and the poor and the needy fast half their lifetime. Oh! darling, this is nothing. Believe me, it is nothing; and now leave me, darling, leave me and go and sleep."

"Beatrice, I cannot. My eyes cannot close whilst I know that you have tasted nothing this

day. Beatrice, yield for this once, for my sake."

Beatrice sighed and kissed her.

"It is for your sake that I do not yield," she said.

Mrs. Gervoise wrung her hands and wept.

Beatrice sighed.

"Oh! my darling," she said; "this is worse than the fasting. I do and bear so much that your life may at least be calm; and yet I cannot prevent this grief. Darling, leave me, pray leave me, I can bear no more. Try me no further. Nothing—nothing," she added, her light girlish voice rising as she spoke, "shall make me touch the food it pleases Mr. Gervoise to send me up. I am the mistress of this house, and I will eat at my own table."

Mrs. Gervoise wrung her hands again.

"Come, I will tell you something," coaxingly said Beatrice; "if he does not release me by to-morrow morning, I will bid some of the servants open the door and let me out, and they will do it. But I had rather not—I had rather not—I know him, and I know too how he can twist and turn. It is safer to conquer him silently, and not tread upon him with too hard a foot; for, serpent-like, he turns and stings."

"Beatrice, you frighten me," said her mother shuddering, and speaking in a faint whisper.

"Then leave me and trust me," whispered

Beatrice in her turn. "Trust me, I say; have I not always prevailed all these years? Trust me, I say; he knew that his real power was soon to escape him, and so he made this desperate attempt to create terror, and to build a new tyranny on another basis; but he shall be defeated, and so good night. She kissed her mother again, and gently pushed her away; and Mrs. Gervoise left the room, and Beatrice heard the key turn in the lock.

She sank back on her bed. She was too faint and tired to undress. She lay there looking at the sky and at the full moon, which shone in upon her and shed its two squares of light on the floor, as on that evening of her childhood eleven years before, when she had promised her poor weak mother to protect and defend her against the oppressor; "and I have kept that vow," thought Beatrice, "through every trial, and insolence, and hardship. I have kept it, and I will keep it till I die, my poor darling. Never, so help me Heaven, never shall you suffer through fault of mine."

Thought would go no further; Beatrice was sinking into a torpor of exhaustion and weariness. Her eyes closed, sleep, not the light happy sleep and sound of full health, overtook her. When she awoke the next morning the sun shone in her room, and her mother stood by her side with a troubled and yet happy face.

"What is it, darling?" asked Beatrice.

"Mr. Gervoise is gone on a journey," replied her mother.

"And I am free," said Beatrice, smiling; "I told you so."

She sat up, pale and weak, but triumphant; and little knowing how dear the cost of victory had been.

"Breakfast in bed, my dear," said her mother.

"No, I am not ill," replied Beatrice; "besides, I told Mr. Gervoise I would not eat unless at my own table, and I will not."

She rose, and attempted to dress, but her strength failed her. She looked at her mother, and tried to laugh.

"I did not know I was so weak," she said; "I suppose I must take something in my room after all."

"I have ordered some chicken broth for you, my dear," said Mrs. Gervoise.

"As you like, darling."

Her voice was faint and low, and she sank back exhausted. Even more than the fasting did Beatrice feel the fierce battle of the last thirty-six hours. It had ended in her victory, but, though she made light of them, her mental sufferings had been acute and deep. They had left a torpor behind them, on which fever followed. Beatrice

could scarcely eat the whole of that day, and towards evening she was so far unwell that Doctor Rogerson had to be called in.

The gay young doctor, who had settled near Carnoosie with a rosy bride, was now a pale, thin, nervous man, with bleached hair, and a careworn face. If you had been told that Doctor Rogerson was a clergyman, whom distracting conscientious scruples had compelled to forsake a living of a thousand a year, you would have believed it easily ; you might also have credited the assurance that he was an unfortunate bankrupt ; or again, if you had seen him in the dock on an accusation of forgery, you would not have thought it strange. Not that Doctor Rogerson looked a pious, unfortunate, or dishonest man ; but there was that in his appearance which might suggest much that was doubtful. You did not feel, on looking at Doctor Rogerson, that he had a fixed, straight, or happy position in life ; and nothing, therefore, could be further from your thoughts than to identify him with that cheerful, busy, active person who calls himself the parish doctor. This gentleman had seldom or never attended Beatrice, who enjoyed perfect health. He was much surprised at the prostrate state in which he found her, and questioned Mrs. Gervoise concerning what could have caused it. Mrs. Gervoise stammered a confused explanation,

and Doctor Rogerson, though nonethe wiser, nodded sagaciously, and prescribed some inoffensive remedies. Beatrice, who lay on a couch with closed eyes, listened to his subdued voice, as one in a dream.

"Are you sure," he was saying to Mrs. Gervoise, "are you sure, ma'am, that it is nothing mental?"

"Indeed, Doctor Rogerson, I—I really can't say. I hope not."

"Oh! I thought perhaps that this sad matter of Mr. Ray——"

He ceased abruptly. Beatrice opened her eyes. They stood at the furthest end of her room, near a small table on which burned a light. It shone on their two faces. Beatrice saw Doctor Rogerson's look of surprise, which seemed to say, "What! does she not know?" and Mrs. Gervoise's startled countenance and upraised forefinger enjoining silence.

"What about Mr. Ray?" cried Beatrice, sitting up. "How is he? Is he well? What has happened? What about him, Doctor Rogerson?"

They did not answer.

"He is ill!" said Beatrice. "I know he is ill!"

Doctor Rogerson coughed, and was going to speak, but Beatrice checked him. She knew all. His look had told her the sad truth. Mr. Ray was dead!

"He too!" she cried, clasping her hands in strange passion, "he too! First Mr. Raby, then Mr. Ray."

"My dear," cried her mother, frightened.

"Yes," said Beatrice, standing up and looking at them both. "I do not care who hears me. These two men have died, one because he could protect, and the other because he loved me."

Doctor Rogerson looked alarmed and shocked, for Beatrice only said what the whole of the little world around Carnoosie was saying. These two ominous deaths were laid by opinion to Mr. Gervoise's door, and he had fled before the verdict of that mighty power, and was hiding no one now knew where.

"Mr. Ray died of complaint of the heart," stammered Doctor Rogerson in some confusion.

"Yes, but who went and found him? Who inflicted the shock that killed him?" passionately asked Beatrice.

Doctor Rogerson was silent, and gladly obeying the sign Mrs. Gervoise made, he left the room.

"How was it? How did it happen?" said Beatrice. "Tell me all—I must know all—I must!"

"Later, my dear, later."

And later, after weeks of fever, during which

she was haunted by Mr. Raby, as she had seen him sitting dead with the pen in his hand and the letter before him—never to be finished in this world; by Mr. Ray as she imagined him pale and calm in his last sleep; later, we say, Beatrice learnt the little that was ever known.

Mr. Gervoise had called on Mr. Ray. Their conversation was loud and angry, for Mr. Gervoise threatened to make Mr. Ray leave Carnoosie; and Mr. Ray, roused out of his mildness, defied his power. He looked very pale when his visitor left. When his sister entered his room the next morning, he was unconscious and dying. On his pillow lay an open volume full of heavenly lore, the wisest, the best, the most sublime that ever spoke to man; but never again was Mr. Ray to peruse its pages. He died without having recovered consciousness, and at once a cry of indignation was raised against Mr. Gervoise. Mr. Ray's death, sad in itself, was not without some sad results. He died intestate, and his sister, who was but a half-sister, did not get his little property. This went to the heir-at-law, and though it was but just, opinion thought it hard, and pitied the poor sister. With all this, too, Mr. Gervoise was probably acquainted, for he stayed away through the winter, which Beatrice spent with her mother in peace indeed, but also in deep and sincere sorrow.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. GERVOISE had fallen into a doze, and Beatrice's book had dropped upon her lap. She sat back in her chair, looking at the fire, building wonderful visions in those embers of molten ore. The keen blast, laden with snow, which swept around old Carnoosie, did Beatrice good. She was sheltered from its severity, and the knowledge that it was there, an element of strife and pain, braced her nerves for endurance. She rose softly, and went to the window. She drew back the heavy curtains, and lifted a corner of the blind. The snow had ceased, and though no moon shone, there was light in the starless sky. Before her lay the white terrace, and beyond it, again, the frozen fountains and the buried flower-garden. Beneath how deep a pall lay the seeds of life and beauty!

"As they are, so is my life," thought Beatrice; "excitement enough of one kind it has, heaven knows, but dangerous and bitter. I am like a mariner ever sailing by a rocky shore, ever struggling against shoals and perilous waves, and never

reaching green land. No true, no real happy life is mine. Verily, I am buried in the snow, and it is well for me to lie and sleep there, unless when I must waken for the battle !”

There was bitterness and despair in the thought. Beatrice had much of the heroic element in her—little or none of that which makes the saintly martyr. She was well able to strive, scarcely to endure. Her nature was warm, genial, tender, and loving, though both impatient and imperious, and her daily life exacted that she should be firm and gentle, strong as a rock, and as impassive. She longed for happiness with a most human longing, and she knew that woman’s happiness and woman’s destiny were closed upon her. No lover must ever woo Beatrice, no husband must ever take her to his heart, no children must ever nestle on her bosom. Whilst either Mr. Gervoise or his wife lived, Beatrice must not marry ; for Beatrice would not forsake her mother, and she would ask no man to tolerate the yoke she herself could scarcely bear. This Beatrice knew, and though she often bade happiness a stoical defiance, often, too, she could not help pining for it in her secret heart. Oh ! to be free, and to share the common lot ! To be a girl, gay, thoughtless, and merry ; to read novels, and dream that they came true ; to dance at county balls with charming young men, and think them

demigods; to be twenty in thought and feeling, as she was in years! Yes, we are sorry to say it, Beatrice, who was a good classical scholar, whom Mr. Ray had taken so far in the fair world of knowledge, pined for the comparative ignorance and happiness of other girls, for she felt that they could live, and she knew that she did not. And thus, in the bitterness of her heart, she felt that hers was but a wintry lot, many a fathom deep in snow, but with no wakening, no glorious sun and balmy spring in prospect.

"I cannot bear it," rebelliously thought Beatrice, turning away from the window, and flinging herself on her chair; and an inexorable voice replied, in accents stern and strong:

"You must!—you must!"

The sound of carriage wheels driving up the avenue seemed the bitter echo of that voice. Mrs. Gervoise awoke, and gave her daughter a scared look.

"Who is that?" sharply asked Beatrice.

"Mr. Gervoise wrote that he would come this evening," faltered Mrs. Gervoise.

Beatrice rose, kissed her mother, and gently whispering, "Good night, darling!" she left the room.

She knew that she must see him again, but she felt she could not now face the murderer of Mr. Ray. Not in her present mood could she look

on the pitiless man who had helped to cut short that gentle and blameless life, whose cruel hand had destroyed that little nest of love, and thrown the bereaved sister once more adrift on the world. Avoiding the main staircase, Beatrice passed through the dark, cold rooms, where there was no chance of meeting him. She knew them well—the same reason that now made her enter them had rendered her familiar with them from her childhood; ever had she shunned the presence that was to her as the fabled upas tree—the poisonous shadow thrown on her young life, and increasing in intensity as that life went on. Eagerly, and with a sense of relief, Beatrice passed, as we said, through the cold dark rooms of her own Carnoosie. The servants had forgotten to draw down the blinds, or to close the shutters, and, as she went, Beatrice caught glimpses of the white world without, of the dull sky, and the dark masses of trees, and she felt glad to know that she was alone. At length she reached Madam's closet, as it was still called; she opened a door, went down a steep and narrow staircase, and found herself in the library.

She had left it an hour before, and the wood fire (coals were never burned in Carnoosie) was still blazing cheerfully on the hearth. Her chair was still standing near the table, and the dancing light which shot from the burning logs shewed

her the still open book she had been reading. Wax lights were at hand ; Beatrice did not light them. She did not want to read, she wanted to think, and to feel bitter and sad as she remembered Mr. Ray. So she sat down, and, thinking of the man upstairs, she nursed up her resentment for the sake of him who slept in the little churchyard of Carnoosie. But it was decreed that Beatrice's thoughts should ever revert to herself on this evening. From Mr. Ray they went to Mr. Ray's house, now shut up, silent, and lone; then by a rapid transition from that deserted dwelling to a German *Märchen* the two had been reading, an old childish story, founded on the basis of the eternal tradition: a princess fast asleep and wakening in a new world when the hundred years were out. "Ah! if I could be so," thought Beatrice, "if I could fall asleep here in this old library, with my poor darling upstairs, and waken free from the fetters which bind me, with no Mr. Gervaises—nothing of the present save its youth. I dare say I should find some other master in Carnoosie, some venerable old gentleman, with blooming daughters and stalwart sons and a troop of grandchildren, people of the new world, who would run away from me affrighted, then dispute my claim, and call Beatrice Gordon an impostor. Ah! I do not know how to follow out the fairy tale—I am

too matter-of-fact. That is not it. There should be a prince to waken the princess and bear her away from past troubles, enchanted castle and all, to the new life.

“And far across the hills they went,
In that new world which is the old.”

The door which opened softly, disturbed Beatrice's reverie. She started up from her chair, and asked in a quick, indignant voice: “Who is there?”

“C'est moi,” replied a man's voice in French. Mr. Gervoise often used French, and Beatrice hated the language for his sake, but it was not Mr. Gervoise who had spoken. Standing near the door, she saw a man's form, but it was taller and sligher than her stepfather's. Her heart beat, her brain felt wild.

“Gilbert, Gilbert!” she cried, after vainly trying to see him, “is it you?”

A quiet laugh, and the word “Guess,” were the only answer she got. Beatrice quickly knelt on the hearth, and, thrusting the tongs into the fire, caused a bright sharp blaze to shoot up—it filled the room, and showed her the well-remembered features of Gilbert Gervoise, scarcely altered by years, though a fair moustache now shaded his upper lip.

“You are Gilbert!” she cried triumphantly. “I knew your voice—you are he!”

She rose, got a light, and, standing with her

back to it, she looked at him with eager joy.

Gilbert Gervoise seemed touched at the warmth of her welcome. He drew near and held out his hand; and when he held Beatrice's in his clasp, he gently made her turn to the light. "It is my turn to look at you now," he said, smiling.

His looks said that he found a change; but Beatrice scarcely heeded him. Her joy, though silent, verged on rapture. Her face burned with delight, her eyes shone like diamonds, her trembling lips smiled. Gilbert beheld her with tender admiration. He had never forgotten Beatrice's little childish face; it had shone upon him in the past, and it was very pleasant and very sweet to behold it again in all the girlish grace and bloom of the present.

"Speak—speak!" she cried impatiently, "I want to hear you."

"Mrs. Gervoise is waiting for us," quietly said Gilbert; "she sent me for you."

"Is not his father upstairs?" quickly thought Beatrice, and she as quickly asked—

"Is my mother alone?"

"I found and left her so."

"Did you come alone, Gilbert?"

"Yes—I expected to find my father here—but he cannot come now—the last train was that by which I travelled."

Beatrice's brow cleared, she sighed with relief, her eyes shone again. One happy evening at least was won from time!

"Come up—come up," she said, in her quick way, and she preceded him upstairs. Gilbert offered her his arm, but Beatrice would not take it. She preferred running up the broad staircase before him. Gilbert saw it with regret; he would have liked to feel her leaning upon him; better still would he have liked to take her in his arms and kiss her rosy face; "but I suppose she is too old for that now," he thought.

"Oh! darling, it is Gilbert," cried Beatrice, running into her mother's room.

"Yes, my dear; were you not surprised?"

"Surprised — delighted!" corrected Beatrice; "have you forgotten, darling, that Gilbert and I were great friends!"

She looked inquiringly and almost jealously from her mother to Gilbert. They seemed strangely cold and calm. But though Gilbert smiled at her ardour, there was something in his look which soothed Beatrice. She vaguely felt its meaning; it expressed affection and admiration, but tempered by respectful reserve.

"You are hungry—what will you have to eat? You must eat," said Beatrice, rapidly, both stating the fact and anticipating the refusal.

"I shall do all you wish. I believe that used to be the way formerly, Miss Gordon."

Beatrice's bright face grew clouded.

"Ah! you call me Miss Gordon," she said; "you do not like me. Formerly you said 'thou' to me in French."

"Then I was very presumptuous," replied Gilbert, with a grave smile, which told Beatrice he meant to sin thus no more.

"Ah! but I shall not be happy if you do not call me Beatrice!" she almost entreated.

Gilbert bowed, but showed no wish to comply. Beatrice felt that he was altered, after all. His manner was exquisitely refined and courteous, but it was somewhat cold. He had forgotten English, and spoke it correctly but slowly, and with evident difficulty. A certain formality was the result. Moreover, Gilbert, who was barely twenty-five, was thirty in manner. If his features were little altered, their meaning was not that which Beatrice remembered them to have once worn. His smile had lost some geniality; his look was more penetrating than tender. Beatrice felt vaguely that, though he might yield to her, he was meant by Nature to be her ruler, not through superiority of intellect, or even by strength of will, but because his patient judgment must prevail where her more impulsive temper must fail,

Truly the Gilbert who stood before her was very different from the Gilbert whom her girlish imagination had framed out of the recollections of childhood. The imaginary man was an ideal hero; Greek serenity sat on his brow; suavity and unblemished virtue were his attributes. The real man looked calm, firm, and kind; but life and the world and natural penetration had done their work. Beatrice felt confident that he was honourable and good, but girl as she was, she read the signs of life's battle in his face. Gilbert had suffered and striven, and been tempted; and though victory was written in his whole aspect, the cost of victory appeared there too. His had been no joyous, happy youth, and hence, perhaps, premature austerity clouded his early manhood.

"But I will not be afraid of Gilbert," rebelliously thought Beatrice; "he used to do as I wished when I was a child, and he shall do what I wish still."

At once she tried her power by close and direct questioning.

"What have you been doing all these years?"

"Working hard. I am now Docteur Gilbert Gervoise."

"Where do you practise?"

"In Verville."

"You must not stay in Verville. You must

come to Carnoosie, and settle here. We will buy out Dr. Rogerson."

She spoke with pretty, coaxing despotism; and Gilbert smiled, and said, "To be sure."

"Which means, of course, not," rejoined Beatrice, quickly; "confess it does."

"Well, perhaps it does," replied Gilbert, still smiling.

He was evidently amused, and evidently, too, he would not treat her proposal seriously. Beatrice reddened, and looked vexed, but was luckily diverted from her displeasure. To gratify Miss Gordon—for it was not his wont to exert himself so late—the accomplished M. Panel sent up a light but perfect little supper, of which the traveller alone partook, and on which tea followed.

"You must eat here," imperatively said Beatrice, "we will not let you go down to the dining-room; it is cold and formal. Besides, I want you up here."

Gilbert yielded, nothing loth.

"How pleasant it is to find you so kind!" he said, frankly.

"Did you not expect it?" she asked.

"I could not tell—I did not know. I expected to find you altered, and so you are. I left a child—I find a woman; but the change might have been greater still."

"How so?"

"You might have been distant and polite."

Beatrice smiled brightly, and was going to reply, when her mother said :

"My dear, if you go on talking so, Gilbert will not be able to eat a morsel. Play us something."

"I believe it is the only way to keep me silent," honestly said Beatrice.

So she went to her piano, opened it, and sat down and played. But if she could not talk, she could look, and the temptation proved irresistible. She sat with her back to Gilbert, but, whilst her nimble fingers ran over the keys, she every now and then turned her head round and showed him her bright young face beaming with the gladness which his arrival had lit there.

A genial and charming creature Gilbert certainly thought her, and everything in his manner said so, when, the meal and the music being both over, she came back and made the tea.

"How exquisitely you play, Miss Gordon," he said, as, tea being ended, they sat side by side facing the fire. Mrs. Gervoise's couch stood a little way from the scorching heat.

"Beatrice," she said, holding up her finger, "little Beatrice."

"No," he firmly replied, "you are not, you never will be, little Beatrice again."

"I wish I were," she said a little vehemently.

"Do not," he answered in a half-whisper, for he saw that Mrs. Gervoise had fallen asleep; "do not."

He was bending towards her, and Beatrice could not mistake either his look or his smile. Both meant, "Do not, for the girl is ten times more charming than ever was the child."

A blush of gentle triumph stole over Beatrice's face, and Gilbert, looking at her, smiled again, and felt luxuriously happy.

Beatrice was exquisitely pretty; the sound of her music still rang in his ears. She was the fond and true Beatrice of old days, and another Beatrice, too, warm, impetuous, and yet graceful and refined. Her motions and attitudes charmed his eye, her face attracted it irresistibly. To sit thus and look at her in that large old room, with its lofty ceiling and stately furniture, was as a delightful dream in a life both monotonous and austere. For once his feelings found vent in words, and he could not help saying,

"This is happiness I had not hoped for."

Beatrice looked up quickly.

"No," continued Gilbert, with evident emotion, "I did not think I should ever see you again, Beatrice."

"Ah! Beatrice at last!" she cried triumphantly.

He reddened a little and laughed.

"And why did you not hope for it, Doctor Ger-voise?" she asked; "am I not the mistress of Carnoosie? And were you not sure of your welcome?"

Gilbert forbore to answer this question, and resumed.

"The mistress of Carnoosie! Yes, I remember, you were very tenacious of that title."

"And I am still. I am not altered, Gilbert, whatever you may think."

"Oh! yes, you are altered," persisted Gilbert, who seemed to have acquired a talent for teasing; "you will never be little Beatrice again. I almost dreaded seeing you, for I felt I should lose her then—and I have lost her," he added with a provoking smile.

Beatrice felt irritated and perplexed. It was plain that, whilst she rejoiced in the present, Gilbert, though he admired that present, would only like her in the past.

"Dear, good little Beatrice," he continued, "how often I dreamed of her, and felt her little arms clinging to me! How often I heard her imperious 'don't be long.' As years passed, I dreamed less of course, but still there was a little Beatrice in my thoughts, a little brown and wilful mistress of Carnoosie, who was very prompt with 'you shall,' and 'I will,' and who loved me very dearly."

Beatrice looked at the fire and smiled, but her heart ached. She was quick and sensitive, and understood Gilbert very well. She was a delightful remembrance of his boyhood, but she was no more—and she must be nothing in his present life, that had hopes and fears and aims and desires, with which Beatrice Gordon and Carnoosie had nought to do. As she came to this sad conclusion, Gilbert perplexed her again by saying,

“Now, I have a strong fancy that you never dreamed of me, Miss Gordon, and that poor Gilbert was quickly forgotten. Do not tell me so, however. I would rather know nothing on that head. Perhaps you do not know,” he added in a graver tone, “that, after our parting, I was ill three weeks in Verville.”

“Ill ! you were ill !” cried Beatrice.

“Very ill indeed, for fever set in. And you ?” he added, looking at her keenly.

Beatrice blushed and looked contrite.

“I could not eat the day you left,” she began.

“But your appetite returned the next morning. Just what I should expect from little Beatrice.”

Tears of vexation rose to Beatrice’s eyes.

“I do not understand you, Gilbert,” she said, a little vehemently; “I am so happy to see you again, and you seem to think only of what I was years ago.”



"Have I displeased you?" asked Gilbert, gently and gravely.

"You have," was her indignant reply.

"Well, then, forgive me. I regret it."

There was a persuasive tenderness in his voice which went to Beatrice's heart. She did not say she forgave him, but the cloud passed at once from her face. Gilbert looked at her with a thoughtful smile. If he perplexed her, she perplexed him too. He was pleased and happy to see Beatrice again, but the passionate friendship of his boyhood was dead, and he could not believe that it was still a reality for the handsome young mistress of Carnoosie. He forgot, or he did not know, that she had led a sad, secluded life, a life made to cherish old memories with ardent regret and obstinate tenacity. His grief had been the deeper, but hers had been the more enduring feeling of the two. This Gilbert could not see. It was not possible, in his creed, that Beatrice should have loved him all these years. The warmth of her welcome, the vehement directness of her reproaches, were only the signs of an impulsive, girlish nature. But yet there was sweetness and pleasure in the curiosity this strange girl made him feel. Beatrice was unlike any other young lady, French or English. The tyrant propriety, reserve, shyness, seemed unknown to her. She was ever taking him by sur-

prise, throwing him off his guard, and making him say things he was astonished the next moment at having said. He felt that sitting thus by her side, and exchanging the quick shafts of speech with her, he was no longer the Gilbert Gervoise, reserved and calm, known in Paris and in Verville. He felt bewitched—another man moving in another world.

“We must be friends,” said Beatrice, after a long pause. “I shall not scold you any more, Gilbert, but we must be friends.”

“Granted,” he replied, with mock gravity.

But Beatrice would see and resent nothing.

“What have you been doing since we parted?”

“Studying medicine in Paris.”

“Why medicine?”

“Because I am not rich enough to do my own pleasure. The law I hate, for art I have no genius—science, which I like, is not a livelihood. I took medicine as nearest to the pursuits I would have chosen had I been free.”

“I am sure you would be great in science,” cried Beatrice; “it is a shame to leave it by. Come and live with us, Gilbert; there is a laboratory in Carnoosie, as you know. Mr. Ray said it was a fine one—it shall be yours. Come—you must!”

“What a child she is!” thought Gilbert, look-

ing down at her eager face, and reading her ardent eyes with a calm, searching glance. "There is a proposal for you from a girl of twenty to a man of twenty-five! I suppose she has no conception that the society of rich and handsome girls is rather a dangerous luxury to a poor fellow. I am not sure that she would care, either. I rather think Miss Beatrice Gordon was made to have slaves."

"Well, is it to be?" impatiently asked Beatrice.

"No, I am Docteur Gervoise, and Docteur Gervoise I must remain. It would never do to bury myself in the delights of your castle of indolence. Work, and hard work too, awaits me."

"I know what it is!" indignantly said Beatrice, rising as she spoke; "you will have nothing to do with me—that is it!"

Yes, it was it, and Gilbert coloured at her plain speaking, but he had no time to reply. Mrs. Gervoise awoke with a start, and sitting up, asked hurriedly what was the matter?

Beatrice tried to laugh.

"I am already scolding Gilbert," she said.

"Luckily he is, as he always was, patient and calm."

Mrs. Gervoise gave them a bewildered glance. Beatrice was red as a rose, and Gilbert looked by no means calm. He seemed surprised, too, and was looking at Beatrice as if he meant to read her

through. The honest and the penetrating, who have not learned to veil those looks, are not sufficiently on their guard against them. They do not know what a tale they tell, and how much they betray that is often unknown to the owner.

"My goodness! I hope he is not going to fall in love with Beatrice!" thought Mrs. Gervoise, frightened at the mere prospect—for what would not be Mr. Gervoise's anger if his favourite younger son were supplanted by the unloved elder one!

"My dear," she said, hurriedly, and as if she thus hoped to forestall the calamity she feared, "Gilbert must be tired after his journey, and you are keeping him up."

"I am not fatigued," said Gilbert, who had a frame of iron; "but you are in need of rest, and I shall bid you good night."

"Are you afraid of ghosts?" asked Beatrice, a little abruptly.

"I have never had the opportunity of testing my fortitude in that respect," gravely replied Gilbert.

"Then I shall give you that opportunity to-night," saucily said Beatrice. "I have ordered the haunted room to be got ready for you."

"And what is the ghost like?" asked Gilbert, without seeming to look at her, though Mrs. Gervoise could see he was watching her keenly.

"Do you remember the portrait of the Italian lady in Madam's closet?" asked Beatrice.

"Quite well," and he remembered not merely that portrait, but the day on which they had looked at it, and how they were lost in the forest, where Beatrice nestled in his arms; that little Beatrice so like and unlike the proud young beauty before him.

"Well, she is the ghost."

"And as like you in death, I hope, as you are like her in life," said Gilbert, looking full at Beatrice.

"Mr. Gervoise will kill me," thought Mrs. Gervoise, distracted.

"If tradition speaks truly," demurely replied Beatrice, "she comes in the shape of a large black raven, and will croak and flap her wings at your window."

"Let her," said Gilbert laughing. "I will open my window to no such ugly spirits."

"My dear," reproachfully said Mrs. Gervoise, "you keep Gilbert standing."

Gilbert took the hint, and bidding the ladies a good night, left them.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEATRICE remained standing on the hearth. She looked excited and happy. Never had her mother seen her so. "After all," thought Mrs. Gervoise, "how could Gilbert help admiring her? Beatrice is no perfect beauty, to be sure; but she is so bright, so pretty, and unlike most girls. I could see he was surprised as much as charmed; but, my goodness, she must not get fond of him!" And knowing that contempt is the sure destroyer of love, Mrs. Gervoise artfully began her attack.

"How countirfied poor Gilbert is," she said.

"Do you think so, darling. I thought he had such fine manners."

"Well, but he looks countrified, my dear."

Beatrice seemed puzzled.

"He is very handsome;" she said, "much handsomer than his brother. Antony is too pretty. Gilbert is manly."

"My dear, do not let your father hear you say so," faltered Mrs. Gervoise.

"Oh! no, of course not. Do you know what has brought Gilbert, darling?"

"He told me he had an appointment with his father."

"It was not to see me he came," thought Beatrice, "and I would gladly have travelled a hundred miles to look at his face."

She was silent, and Mrs. Gervoise wondered what she should say next. Beatrice, tired with standing, had thrown herself in the arm-chair Gilbert had just left; her dark head rested against the crimson velvet; her flushed face looked languid; her whole aspect was unusually troubled, for there was ever serenity in Beatrice's ardour.

"She is in love with him," thought Mrs. Gervoise, sitting up with a start that roused Beatrice at once.

"What ails you, darling?" she asked.

"Let us go to bed, my dear."

They parted, and Beatrice went to her own room. She thought of Gilbert, but more calmly than her mother fancied, and more searchingly, too. She wondered what the real man was like, and if there were so great a difference between the old and the new Gilbert as there seemed to be. She could not bear to think that there was—that the Gilbert who now slept under her roof gave her the cold

regard of a stranger, instead of the fond affection of a friend.

"He must like me as he used to like me," indignantly thought Beatrice, as her head sank on her pillow. Then she went back to their meeting in the library a few hours ago, and as her lids closed and the heaviness of sleep fell upon her, the verse of the poet—

"And far across the hills they went,"

again came to her, and she dreamed that she was with Gilbert in Verville.

It snowed fast when Beatrice awoke the next morning. "Perhaps the trains cannot run, and Mr. Gervoise will not come," she charitably thought; "at all events I must make the most and the best of the morning." She hastened to dress and go down-stairs. She knew that her mother, who was a late riser, was not up yet, and she had heard Gilbert's voice. "He is in the library," thought Beatrice with rapid intuition, and to the library she went.

Gilbert was not in the library, but in the room next it, the laboratory of which Beatrice had spoken, and which was indeed a fine one. He was examining it with a keen and curious eye, when a rustling of silk behind made him turn round. He saw Beatrice standing on the threshold of the room, this

half-open door in her hand, looking at him gravely. "What a handsome creature she is!" thought Gilbert, struck with the fine classical lines of Beatrice's young face; "and how charmingly she dresses!"

We will not analyse Beatrice's toilette, lest critical readers should find fault with it, and with Docteur Gervoise's taste. We will only say this, it was a morning robe richly trimmed, bright in colour, and simple in shape, and it suited Beatrice to perfection. She looked as brilliant as any exotic bird, and, spite the snowy morning, Gilbert felt in the tropics as he looked at her.

"Good morning," said Beatrice seriously.

"Good morning," he replied, as gravely.

"How did you sleep?"

"Admirably!"

"Did the ghost come?"

"I saw no ghost."

"I am glad to hear it."

Docteur Gervoise smiled, silently.

"Are you going to stay here?" asked Beatrice.

"I meant to do so."

"No, you must not—come!" And still standing on the threshold, she beckoned to him.

"But where shall I go?"

"Never mind—come, I say."

"Why so?"

"Because I want you, to be sure."

She seemed amazed at his resistance.

"Come," she said again, and Gilbert went of course. It was very like the Beatrice of old days to order him about so, and it was very like being a boy again to find himself doing Beatrice's bidding.

Beatrice took him up-stairs to her mother's sitting-room. There were too many spies in Carnoosie for her to stay below with Gilbert. Mrs. Gervoise was not up yet, and the room was just as Beatrice wanted it—solitary; but no one save Mrs. Gervoise herself, who slept in the next apartment, would know that she was there alone with Gilbert. And, little suspecting that Mrs. Gervoise saw this privacy with disapprobation, Beatrice congratulated herself on this admirable plan. She lost no time in letting Gilbert know what she had brought him up for.

"Sit down," she said, pointing to a chair, and taking another herself.

"I am going to hear Her Majesty's pleasure," thought Gilbert, but he did not expect what was coming.

"Now, Gilbert," said Beatrice, "I questioned you last night, and you gave me very brief and unsatisfactory replies. I am not going to let you off so. Please to be more explicit this morning. What have you been doing since we parted?"

Men and women lead such different lives, that

the most blameless of either sex would scarcely care to answer such a question when put by a member of the other. "There is coolness for you!" thought Gilbert, completely taken by surprise; "a most audacious young lady, I must say!"

"Well, you don't answer!" cried Beatrice, putting on a frown; "I ask you again what you have been doing?"

"And I retort the question."

"Oh! I am a bird in a cage," replied Beatrice, with some bitterness; "you would not have me keep count of my seed and groundsel."

"Of course not, but wild birds take such wide flights that they are apt to forget how far they have been, you see."

Beatrice's face fell.

"I see," she said, "that you will tell me nothing, Gilbert; and yet," she added, with a sigh, "I should have liked to know what sort of feelings and hopes and desires there have been in your life—but you will not give me your confidence."

Gilbert could not say that he would. What was there in common between them? How could he tell Beatrice, for instance, that the great object of his medical studies had been to detect the presence of infusoria in the human frame? How could he speak of the humiliation of the flesh to a girl of twenty, fresh as a flower, and looking as if the

taint of disease or the breath of decay could never come near her.

"Had you friends?" persisted Beatrice.

"I had one."

"Is he dead?"

"No."

"Well, then, why do you say 'I had?'"

"Because he is not my friend now."

"How was it?—how did it happen?" she asked, drawing her chair nearer to his, to hear the story.

But this story Gilbert did not care to tell Beatrice either, so he replied, carelessly:

"Oh! it was a foolish quarrel enough."

"You are very tiresome!" indignantly said Beatrice; "you will tell me nothing, and I do so long to know what there has been in your life? Were there no Beatrices?" she jealously asked.

This time Gilbert could answer truly and frankly.

"No, indeed—no Beatrices. Beatrices are unique, and travellers have never found but one at a time."

He spoke so kindly, that Beatrice's heart softened at once. She had found the key at last, and now she was going to open the door and enter. But as she came to this pleasant conclusion, a door which was not that of Gilbert's heart opened, and Miss Jameson entered the room. She looked half

frightened at Beatrice's indignant glance, which greatly amused Gilbert, and hastily said:

"Mrs. Gervoise has sent for me, my dear, and asked me to wait for her here."

This was true enough. Mrs. Gervoise had hit on this expedient for preventing the *tête-à-tête* which her presence was not there to guard.

Having said her say, Miss Jameson sat down and took out her knitting. Gilbert watched Beatrice. She tapped her foot, and looked at the ceiling, and seemed charmed into sudden silence.

"She is meditating something, plotting against her poor mouse of a governess," thought Gilbert, much entertained; "I wonder what it will be?"

Gilbert, who already felt that Beatrice was capable of many strange things, was by no means prepared for what followed.

"Miss Jameson!" she cried, starting to her feet.

Miss Jameson's knitting dropped on her lap, and she gave Beatrice a scared look.

"Do be so kind as to sit down to the piano and play," eagerly continued Beatrice; "Gilbert and I are going to dance."

"What!" cried Gilbert.

"You do not mean to say that you, a Frenchman, cannot dance?" indignantly exclaimed Beatrice.

"Well, but suppose I do not know?"

"Then I shall teach you. Now, Gilbert, you

must, out of charity. I know how to dance, and have never been to a ball in my life. Come, be quick ! We cannot have a quadrille, but we can waltz. One of your best waltzes, Miss Jameson, please—the Duke of Reichstadt's, you know."

Beatrice spoke saucily and cruelly, though she knew it not ; Miss Jameson, who was no accomplished musician, knew but that one waltz. Poor thing ! how often, borne away by the handsome man of thirty-five, had she felt in heaven as this waltz was played by her sister on the old cracked piano in her father's parlour ! But what reck's youth present of youth passed ? So whilst Miss Jameson obediently sat to the piano, and sighed her *et ego in Arcadiâ*, as her fingers ran over the keys, Beatrice called Gilbert with a "Gilbert, quick, quick !"

"Well, but if I commit mistakes," he objected, with feigned reluctance.

"I shall set you right. Oh ! do not loiter !"

Far more leisurely than Beatrice liked, Gilbert obeyed. As methodically as if they were both in a ball-room, he approached the impatient girl, and with a "now mind you tell me," he took hold of her and began.

"Keep time," she said ; "not so ; why, Gilbert, can't you count one, two, three ? yes, that is better. Oh ! what a cheat you are !" she cried, as suddenly

dropping his pretended awkwardness, Gilbert began waltzing with her in perfect time around the room.

"Why, you waltz beautifully!"

"Yes," said Gilbert, gravely; "I passed for that too."

"Oh! this is delightful!" exclaimed Beatrice, wild with pleasure; "faster, Miss Jameson—faster!"

And Miss Jameson played faster, and still they moved in the magic dance, and both felt as if it ought to have no ending. Beatrice had never felt a pleasure so perfect. She had learned dancing, and never practised it; she had dreamed of it at night, and pined for it on wakening in the morning, and now she had that joy at last. Gilbert was her partner, and the blazing fire on the hearth, and the falling snow that passed by the windows, gave her joy a zest more keen. But even as she thought, "Oh! there is nothing like this," Gilbert suddenly stopped, and they both stood still in the middle of the room.

"Well, what is it?" cried Beatrice.

"You must not waltz, Miss Gordon," he said, gravely; "it excites you too much."

And so saying, he sat down, folded his hands, and, what was worse in Beatrice's eyes, he stretched and crossed his legs, evidently resolved not to use them any more for Beatrice's pleasure.

"But I feel quite well, I assure you," she said, earnestly. "Do come, Gilbert!"

"Not on any account," he replied, with the most resolute courtesy. "I can see you are quite feverish."

"Feverish!—I am not feverish. I assure you I am not," and she held out her slender wrist.

Gilbert smiled, but did not unfold his hands to feel Beatrice's pulse.

"The feverishness I mean is of a subtler kind," he replied. "Your face is my criterion—see how flushed you are!"

Beatrice looked at herself in the glass. Her colour was a little heightened by the waltzing, but that was all. She turned back to Gilbert, and gave him a puzzled look. The greatest suavity and courtesy marked his manner, which, though often cold, was never severe; but, for all that, Beatrice felt there was something in Gilbert which said "No" to her, as plainly as if that inexorable little word had been spoken by Gilbert's lips.

And Beatrice was not deceived. Gilbert was saying "no" to her with all his might. He was saying "no" to her youth and beauty, to her dangerous familiarity, and still more dangerous friendship. No door was ever more firmly locked against an intruder than Gilbert's heart was now barred against the handsome mistress of Carnoosie. Early in life had Gilbert learned that

bitter lesson. He could deny himself dangerous pleasures, as well as guilty passions. The first warmth of their meeting over, he had felt that there was danger in Beatrice. As she stood before him, graceful, richly attired, pretty, and, above all, familiar and fond, though disappointed, Gilbert looked at her firmly, and thought: "That girl is a diamond, a costly gem, unfit for a poor man. Why, I could live for a month on the price of her morning dress! Just fancy that dainty Bird of Paradise in the cage I have in Verville, or just fancy me, the country doctor, living in Carnoosie on a woman's bounty!"

His colour rose, his lip curled at the thought.

"Why, it is you who look feverish!" said Beatrice, watching him closely.

Gilbert reddened still more, for he was young and impressible, though self-denying; he was modest, too, with all his pride, and had not lost the faculty of blushing.

"I am too delicate for waltzing," he said, trying to speak gaily. "You don't know what weak nerves we have, *nous autres médecins!*"

"There does not seem to be anything like weakness about you, Gilbert," observed Beatrice, sitting down at some distance from him, and looking at the fire as she spoke. "You are steel—clear, cool, and unbending."

"But steel does bend," argued Gilbert.

"Yes, enough to make one feel its strength."

And still she looked at the fire.

"Now, I know there are tears in those bright eyes of hers!" thought Gilbert, "for else Beatrice would look me in the face. My poor little Beatrice, I have hurt you! Oh! why are you not my little Beatrice still? How soon a kiss would restore peace between us, or rather how I would have waltzed with you to your heart's content! It is a pity, and a mortal pity too, that you are grown up, and such a pretty girl!"

"You may shut up the piano, Miss Jameson," said Beatrice, in rather a subdued voice. "Many thanks for your trouble."

Mrs. Gervoise, whom the sounds of the music and the waltzing had both startled and alarmed, now entered the room, and found matters exactly as she wished them to be. Gilbert and Beatrice sat rather apart, in evident coolness.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

